# RED TIGER

## ADVENTURES IN YUCATAN AND MEXICO

PHILLIPS RUSSELL

ROUTE BY BOAT
" " TRAIN
" " CANOE ... (Dugout)
" " HORSE
" " BULLOCK
" " TRAMCAR (horse)
" " MOTOR
" " MOTOR BOAT
HIDALGO
Mexico
TLAXCALA
Jalapa
Vera Cruz
Orizaba
Puebla
MORELOS
PUEBLA
VERA CRUZ
Tierra Blanca
GUERRERO
Oaxaca
N
OAXACA
TEHUANTEPEC
San Jeronimo
Tehuantepec
Salina Cruz
Closed
PACIFIC OCEAN
Puerto Angel

MEXICO
Progreso
Bocas
Tizimin
Merida
Motul
Tecoh
Tekax
Valladolid
Sotuta
Temple of Tigers
Chichen-Itza
Peto
YUCATAN
Fruit Ccs
Campeche
CAMPECHE
QUINTANA ROO
Frontera
Carmen
Chetumal Bay
Cayo Ambergris
Villa Hermosa
Belize
Tuxtla
Amatan
AMERICA
BRITISH HONDURAS
Bochil
San Cristóbal
CHIAPAS
GUATEMALA
Río Dolores
Mapastepec
CENTRAL
HONDURAS
Puerto de Ocos
SAL

ALSO BY

*PHILLIPS RUSSELL*

Benjamin Franklin

THE FIRST CIVILIZED AMERICAN

John Paul Jones

MAN OF ACTION

*RED TIGER*

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RED TIGER:
ADVENTURES
IN YUCATAN
AND MEXICO
BY
PHILLIPS RUSSELL
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# *FOREWORD*

*NOT since 1839, when John L. Stephens, the American traveler, and the artist Catherwood began their celebrated 3000-mile journey through the North American tropics, has any attempt been made — except that of the writer and the illustrator of this book — to revisit the scenes of their triumphs and catastrophes, their discoveries and failures, and to follow, as far as possible, their route which lay through Guatemala, the Mexican states of Chiapas and Tobasco, and the peninsula of Yucatan.*

*Messrs. Stephens and Catherwood proceeded from South to North, the former afterwards publishing an account of their extraordinary adventures under the title of "Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan." The writer and the illustrator of the present narrative traveled from North to South, their route lying through Yucatan, the Southeastern and Southern shores of the Gulf of Mexico, up the rivers of Tobasco, and through Chiapas over the Sierra Madre mountains, until the Pacific ocean was reached east of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Their journey was neither as long or as difficult as that of their predecessors, but it contained sufficient "incidents," as further pages will disclose.*

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*RED TIGER*

# I

## *"OYÉ!"*

"OYÉ!"

A Spanish-speaking negro called from our departing boat to a friend who, with a martyr's resignation was sweeping off the dingy, odorous New York pier. The friend pretended not to hear.

"Oyé!"

The sweeper raised his head and permitted himself to grin.

There is always something cheerful and promising in that Spanish call "Oyé!" ("Hear!"). It is much less formal and solemn than "Oiga," which means the same thing. "Oyé" is a light, a laughing word. It is employed only between intimates, and is usually preliminary to a joyful announcement, a piece of good news, or a bit of pleasantry.

"Hear!" repeated our negro as he wiped off the deck-rail and emptied his pail into the patch of roily water which was slowly widening between us and the dock. "Sweep on, *hombre!* Sweep it good and clean. Look at us, *hombre!* see where our nose is pointing — South! Yes, we are sailing South, *hombre,* South to blue water and those sweet countries that you know about. Soon we'll be eating mangoes and *piñas,* but you'll

still be sweeping docks in New York. New York — you can have it, *hombre!* I am going South."

The negro's joy was a good omen with which to begin a voyage. His words instantly widened the horizon until on its farthest rim low clouds, harried by the northeast wind, assumed the shapes of blue islands feather-edged with palm trees and mimosa.

*Shady Walk in Merida's Plaza*

## II

On the sixth day we were standing under those Yucatan palms and mimosas presaged by the clouds over New York bay, and were bargaining with an Indian boy for a ride in a *fotingo,* Ford car, from Progreso, Yucatan's port, to Merida, the capital. He wanted eight pesos; we paid him four, which was too much. There followed an hour's ride over a sombre, monotonous re-

*Maya Women of Merida*

gion in which the only creatures visible were the zopilotes of the air and the campesinos of the soil. These two beings, bird and man, work together in entire harmony. The campesino,

*Type from Yucatecan "Follies"*

the Indian fructifier of Yucatan's blue-green henequen fields, attends to the living, and the taloned scavenger attends to the dead. The campesino wears a strap around his low-bent head.

To this is attached a net bag, always sagging. The burden is heavy, for it is not only produce which is borne in that bag, but Mexico.

We burst past a guard house, where stands a brown soldier with a rifle, pass through an arched gate, and without notice we are in Merida. One's first impression is that the capital of Yucatan is built of pink and blue cubes. Its houses crowding in Spanish style to the pavement's edge, are low, flat-topped, and squarish, and when they are not pink they are blue, with exceptions in white and grey. They wear a Moorish air, and though there are few inhabitants visible, it being the hour of the siesta, there is a touch of the East about the shawled women, their dress, and their gait. If we had been blindfolded, carried through the air, and then suddenly set down, we should have guessed we were nowhere in the Americas but in the Orient, perhaps Burma. The smell of the East, however, is lacking; the streets are straight, crossing each other at mathematically exact angles, and are freshly, beautifully clean, even dainty.

So far there is nothing to remind us that we are in Ichcanzihoo — also called T'ho or Tihoo — one of the sacred cities of the Mayas. On the contrary, it is clear that we are in a modern, alert little city with street railways, traffic policemen, fire companies — we barely escape crashing into a ladder truck at a tight little corner — tile-floored hotels, electric lighting, and other twentieth century, urban appurtenances. Except for the white heat and the clusters of palms, there is not even a sign that we are well south of the Tropic of Cancer.

Nor is there much sign of the medieval Spanish town which replaced the Maya one. One patiently must question the In-

dian boys who drive the numerous and noisy Ford busses to find the *barrio,* the ancient quarter, where a certain poetry and picturesqueness lingered until progress — progress, so bright and glittering on its face, so often dismal in its effects! — came to stamp such things out with its practical, metallic foot. There was a time when the streets of the old *barrio* were marked and named by naïve figures and images, for the benefit of the unlettered aborigines who could not decipher the Spanish

*Sign Marking Street of the Tiger, Old Merida*

signs. Thus, there was the Street of the Flamingo, indicated by a tall red bird atop a house; the Street of the Old Woman, whose image bore a pair of comic goggles on her hooked nose; the Street of the Elephant, marked by a tusker with a long trunk; and the Street of the Two Faces. But now the straight, angled thoroughfares are distinguished, in the interest of efficiency, by numbers only, the even ones running North and South and the odd ones East and West. The result is that

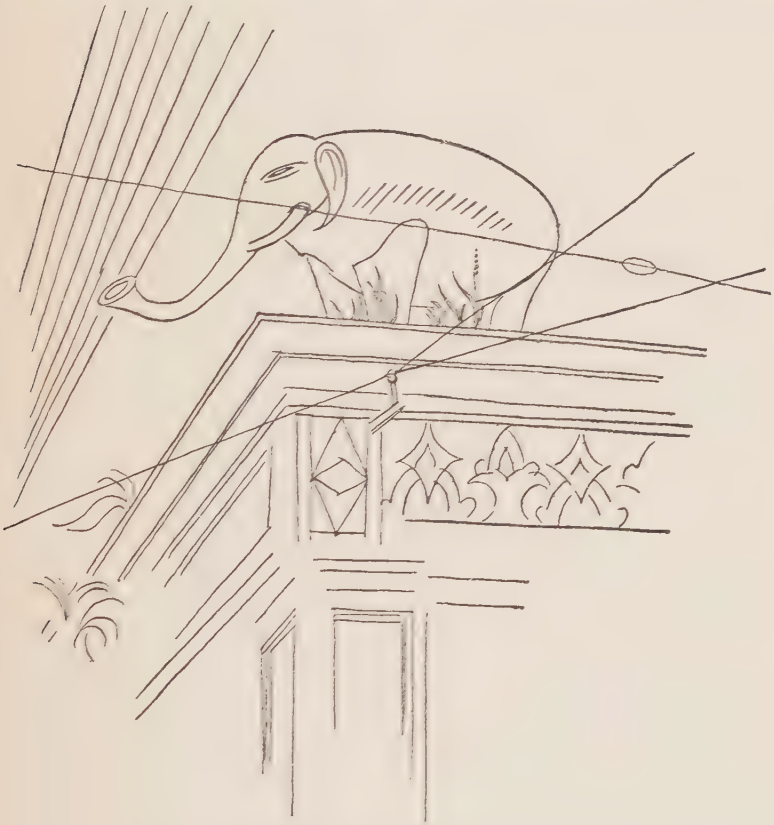
the stranger in their midst stands helpless and forlorn. He might have found Old Woman Street or Two-Faced Street by the old, human, careless method of rambling around till the thing is found, but as it is he must get out a pencil and figure his position like a lost mariner.

So regularly is modern Merida laid out that, externally considered, it might appear to be monotonous, were it not for its plazas. Of these the chiefest is the central square or Plaza del Independencia. This is a gem, a jewel, of a square, probably not surpassed by that of any capital in the world for intrinsic beauty and sheer human interest. No inhabitant of Merida considers the day complete unless he has sauntered across the plaza at least once, or dropped into one of its numerous seats to sniff the breath of the trade-wind from the Caribbean, made fragrant by the flowers which border the walks, or to contemplate the throngs which stream across it from four different directions.

Here come, in the cool of the afternoon, the retired Yucateco, dressed in his peg-topped trousers and starched white jacket which, despite the heat, is buttoned close around the throat and fastened with two gold links; the Indian woman with her oval face, timid dark eyes, and white flowing dress, freshly laundered and brilliantly embroidered around the bodice and bottom hem; the Yucatecan dandy with his hard straw hat imported from Havana and his bent-in, indolent slouch; and the dark male native with his sandalled feet, soft undershirt and starched white trousers, fresh from his bath after the day's work. Here are faces that insist on being recorded in a sketch-book — mahogany and walnut faces, teakwood and yellow pine faces, saddle-colored and light cream faces. Rarely is there

a countenance which is not stained by the fierce Yucatecan sun or browned by a trace of Indian blood.

And the hats! In no respect does the Nordic male show his subservience to uniformity and machine production so much



*Corner of Street of the Elephant, Old Merida*

as in the hopelessness of his hat. It represents no choice of his own, but has been forced or flattered onto his head by a salesman with sleeked hair. It sits upon his cranium as if it had lodged there by accident, depriving his face of all meaning

and obscuring whatever remains of his factory-finished personality.

The costume of the Yucateco is determined by tradition, but his hat is his own choice and reflects his character, revealing his thoughts, his outlook on the universe, and even his fleeting moods. Here are the hats of commerce and the sombreros of the country, plain or fancy, in natural straw or colored, severe or embroidered, but no two alike in dip or angle.

This discussion applies only to the men; the women wear no hats. In the shade they wear only their own hair, black, lustrous, high-piled, gathered into a heavy knot behind, and touched off with a flame of ribbon. In the sun their head-cover is the *rebozo*, a combined shawl and scarf which may be also used to carry eggs or babies in.

Yucatecos greet each other affectionately. They meet with the glad cry of friends long separated. They attach diminutives to their names. "Carlosito, Manuelito, Juanito, Arnulfito!" Two hands clasp while the others reach around and pat backs. They part reluctantly, postponing separation in the manner of lovers. South of the Rio Grande affection is displayed in public only between men; a caress between the sexes is regarded as in bad taste, if not scandalous, and a husband who would so far forget himself as to pat his own wife on the shoulder would be regarded with deep suspicion and perhaps arrested. In Mexico City not long ago a husband of North American birth and indubitable respectability, coming indeed from Massachusetts, put his arm around his wife in a public park. For this he was seized by watchful gendarmes, haled to court, and released only because the judge wished to be indulgent towards a foreigner.

Though the influence of motion pictures and of manners imported from the North have made some dents in the wall of custom, the middle and upper classes of Yucatan adhere faithfully to the old Spanish seclusion of women. It is possibly a mistake, however, to call it Spanish; more likely it is Moorish

*Yucatecan Hours of Ease*

in origin and perhaps is derived from the Hindu custom of *purda.* It seems odd to discover such rigidities in the tropics; but let no one think that there is any condonation of public laxity of outward conduct in tropical Mexico. Even the printed regulations posted on hotel walls urgently counsel *moralidad* to the visitor.

## III

On two sides of the Plaza del Independencia are long arcades and galleries of graceful Spanish arches running past the Governor's palace on the one hand and the Ayuntamiento, the city hall, on the other. On the far side is the tall cathedral, in which neither priest nor nun is any longer visible, and the palace of the former bishop. On the fourth side is the distinguished and well-preserved *Casa de Montejo,* the house of Montejo, the Spanish captain and business man who founded Merida in 1542. In style it is plateresque, that is, resembling silver work; and bears on its façade the images of bearded conquistador soldiers with their mailed feet planted on the heads of humble natives — a symbolic representation if there ever was one.

Each corner of the plaza has its own particular character and habitués. One is the favorite of male loafers and innumerable bootblacks. The opposite corner is given over chiefly to Indian women and their babies. A third, across from the cathedral, is open to the sun, and is less frequented than any other. The fourth is beloved of cigarette vendors and the native chauffeurs of the busses which have a terminus here. Always in progress at this corner is a checker game, with its knot of silent spectators. The square is richly shaded by laurel and zapote trees. The latter bear a heavy, fleshy fruit which occasionally drop upon the heads of loafers beneath with a pronounced thump.

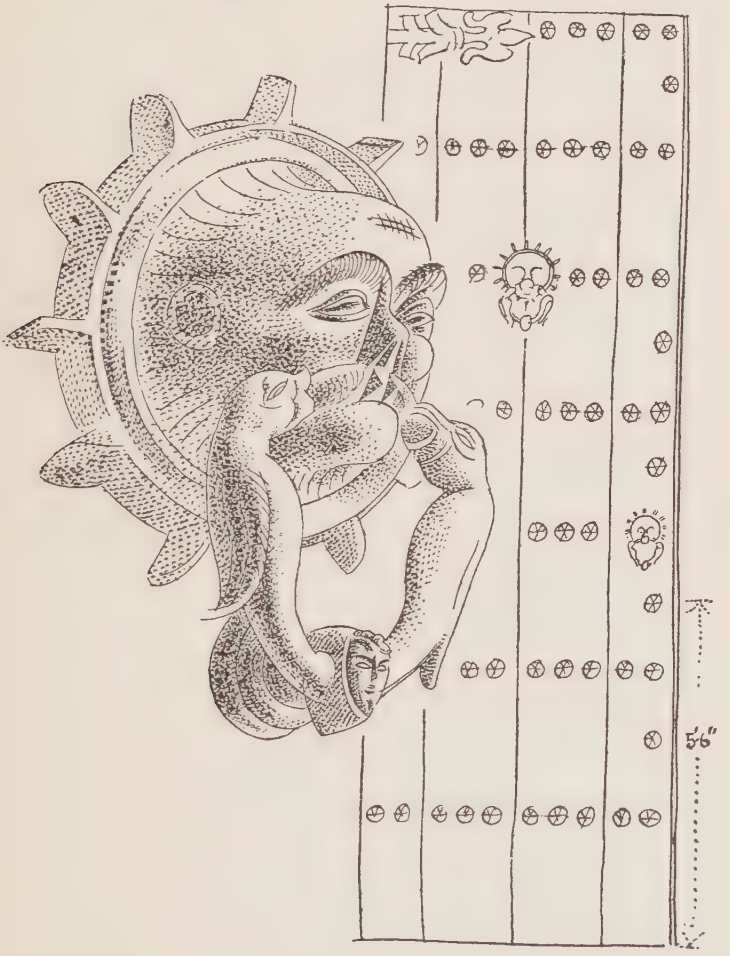
In this square the visitor can sit for untroubled days and recover a balance well-nigh lost in the proddings of life in Nordic climes. He will be molested only by elderly Chinamen

*A Coche of Merida*

who enjoy a municipal license for the sale of peanuts, carried in a double-ended bag thrown over a shoulder. If he sits there long enough he is certain to be rewarded with adventure and odd conversation. One evening as we lounged on a bench there, we saw approaching a troubadour with a guitar. A neighboring loafer informed us that undoubtedly he was a *Mejicano,* a Mexican from the north. With his high cheek-bones and complexion of a slightly reddish-brown tinge not seen in the face of the typical Maya Indian, he was probably an Aztec. His dusty, high-laced boots indicated he had walked many miles. We invited him to halt for a rest and offered him a coin for a *canción.* He accepted with professional gravity, and unslinging his guitar, drew from it a few luscious preliminary chords and launched into a song in a high-pitched tenor voice. Music being peculiarly seductive to Yucatecans, we were quickly in the center of a worshipping cluster of auditors, composed chiefly of bootblacks. We thanked the minstrel for his song and paid him the promised coin. Our brown neighbor then rose and addressing the troubadour, regretted that he had no money to give but begged him to accept a humble cigarette in token of his appreciation. We asked this neighbor to tell us the meaning of the ballad. He said it was a song about a woman who forsook her husband for a lover, but soon found that the lover was in time indistinguishable from the husband.

In Yucatan poets and composers are as thick as the leaves of laurel, and music is the consoler for temperaments tinged with melancholy and veined with pessimism. Their songs are nearly always *triste,* sad, but in chorus they are sung with a lift and vigor which belie the words. In the central market of Merida verse is sold alongside the radishes and dried beans, at

five centavos the sheet. In the warm nights, downy soft and silver bright, serenaders stalk abroad behind a battery of guitars. They sing clearly and sweetly, especially in quartettes. Our




*Knocker on Door of Merida Cathedral*

hotel was two doors from a house where a highly adored señorita was staying, and night after night we luxuriated in the melodies broadcast by ghostly cavaliers with faces lifted toward a balcony and a moon.

## IV

The pleasure-loving atmosphere which surrounds the plaza in the evenings is distinctly continental. The cafés and theatres are full, but of men only. Spanish customs still exert their influence on Yucatecan social life, and husbands and beaux rarely take their ladies to places of public resort. In this respect the habit of secluding and restricting women carries its own peculiar penalty. Since the education of girls is somewhat sketchy, and women are seldom permitted to escape the narrow confines of home, kitchen and children, their conversation becomes uninteresting, and after nightfall the men are prone to flee to club and café. However, the social rigidities are rapidly giving way to the cosmopolitan currents which sweep through Merida, and it is not unusual to find Yucatecan homes in which the women are on terms of perfect equality with their lords.

The lighter sort of theatrical entertainment is supplied by two music halls which give three different performances every evening. They are revues somewhat after the Continental fashion, but considerably influenced by the " Follies " style of entertainment imported from the States. One theatre, in fact, boldly proclaims the " Yucatecan Follies " in English and in large electric lights.

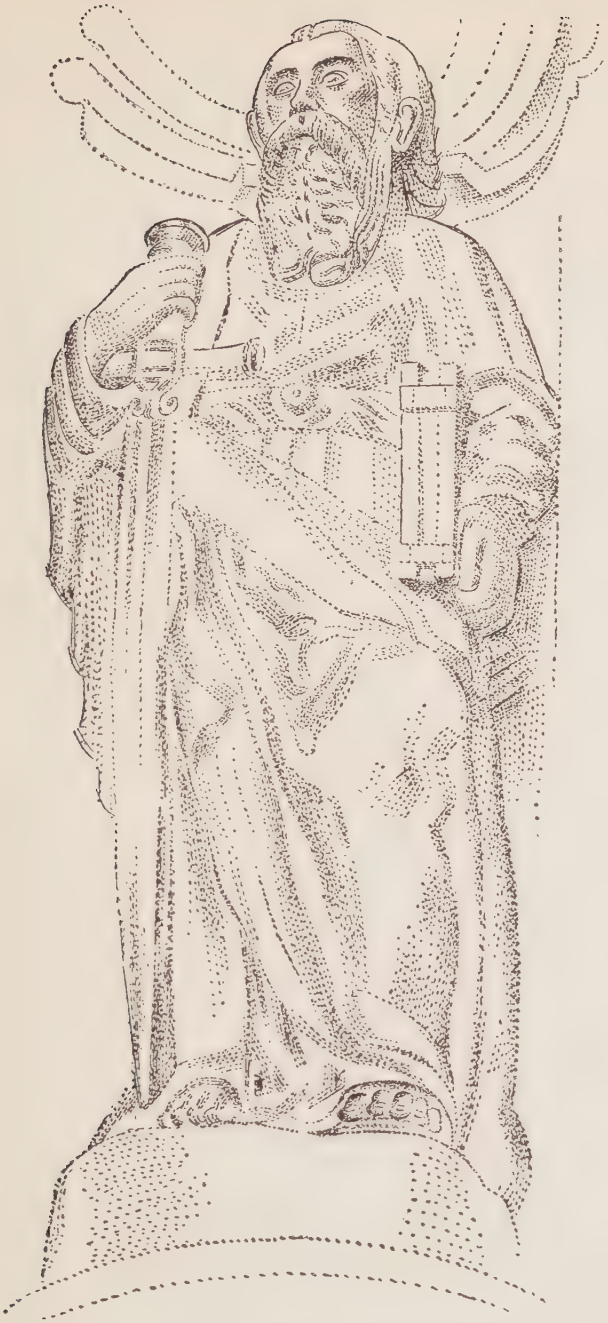
The Follies made famous by Mr. Ziegfeld of New York are imitated, and at times considerably surpassed, in displays of feminine nudity. Most of the chorus ladies are light mestizas, of mixed Spanish and Indian blood. The rest are pure

Indian. The efforts of the producers to make their Maya lasses appear svelte and pencil-like, according to the European and American plan, have quaint results; for the Indian maid's short, round body, which so easily accumulates avoirdupois after her early teens are past, and which so evidently is constructed for domesticity and maternity, does not readily lend itself to the capers required of a typical Follies girl.

The entertainment consists of short humorous sketches in which dialogue is regarded as more important than action. Each sketch ends with a dance in which a man and a woman take part. The native dance, accompanied by a horn and drum, is a kind of shuffling soft-shoe step, the man and woman alternately facing and circling round each other; but another kind of dance, aimed at the almost exclusively male audience, leaves little to the imagination, being derived apparently from the unblushing Orient. The Oriental influence is also revealed in the music, which is weird and repetitious. The Eastern effect is enhanced by the free use of drums beaten with the hands, gourd rattles filled with pebbles, and short batons of wood clicked together.

Merida, being the capital of a state, of course has its Plaza de Toros, or bull-fight ring. It differs, however, from the Spanish or Mexican variety in that the tips of the bulls' horns are usually sawed off, and a clown helps to relieve the monotony of repeated bloodshed. We went one afternoon to attend a bull-fight in which the matadors were young gentlemen amateurs. A Spaniard who sat next to us was highly scornful of their inaccurate sword-thrusts and of the blunted horns of the bulls. The afternoon being damply hot, he had almost pre-

*St. Peter, Merida Cathedral*



*Old Spanish Carving of St. Paul, Merida*

vailed upon us to come out with him and have a refresco, or iced fruit drink, when a clown ran out to give battle to the bull.

This animal was sullen and lazy, and there had been loud demands that he be dragged out and his place taken by a cow; but at sight of the clown with his motley clothes, the bull became incensed that such an indignity should be inflicted upon him and charged with his tail in the air. The clown was armed only with short banderillas, ribboned barbs a perilous four inches long. Ordinarily the banderillero carries two long, ribboned darts about two feet long which he must plant in both the bull's shoulders by reaching over his horns while the beast is charging.

The clown's task was, of course, much more difficult, and we supposed that he would do no more than to make a few comic gestures. However, after running wildly to the barrier each time the bull lowered his head, to the gusty laughter of the multitude, he suddenly turned upon the snorting beast and planted his tiny barbs accurately in the animal's shoulders. The crowd paid homage to this feat by shouts of applause. The bull, bellowing with pain, twisted and shook his huge body in an attempt to dislodge the darts, and the clown seized the opportunity to acknowledge the plaudits with a low bow.

At that instant the bull turned and charged him. The clown ran for the barrier amid shrieks of delight from the spectators, but before he reached safety he stumbled. The bull was instantly upon him. The crowd sprang to its feet anxiously. It seemed certain that the bull would now get his revenge. He tried diligently to get his horns under the prostrate man, even kneeling to do so, but they were too long and too deeply

curved for the purpose. The clown had the presence of mind to turn over on his face and lie flat with his limbs pressed closely together. And then the toreros came running up with their

*The Red Tiger, Merida Museum*

red cloaks and drew the bull off. The clown, his face blackened by the arena dirt, arose, bowed, and limped off, apparently having received nothing worse than a severe trampling.

## V

MERIDA has as one of its chief attractions the Yucatecan Museum, founded by Felipe Carillo, Yucatan's young governor, whose vigorous and progressive administration was brought to a bloody end a few years ago by the bullets of a reactionary uprising. In this Museum one can obtain a better notion of the

*Amateur Banderilleros Pester the Bull*

achievements of the ancient Mayas in architecture, sculpture, and graphic design than anywhere else except among the ruins of Maya cities. Here we came upon a stone image of the Chac Mool or Red Tiger (literally Red Paws), symbol of the Tiger God. The animal was represented in a half-crouching position, as if about to spring, the teeth bared in a snarl. The lines and planes were simple and smooth, the compact mass of the figure

suggesting feral strength and savagery. The Mayas had no tools except flint axes and rubbing stones, consequently the figure must have represented months of laborious toil. It had been hewn and rubbed down from a solid piece of whitish grey limestone, but patches beneath the belly indicated that it had been painted over with several coats of red ochre. The back was flattened, possibly to hold a bowl of copal incense. We were so fascinated by the figure that we obtained the permission of the director, Don Luis Rosado Vega, to make a cast of it.

Ordinarily the task would have required only a few days, but we found ourselves sadly handicapped by a lack of proper tools and materials, not to mention the humid climate. However, it was at last completed, and we were free to visit other ancient centers of Maya life.

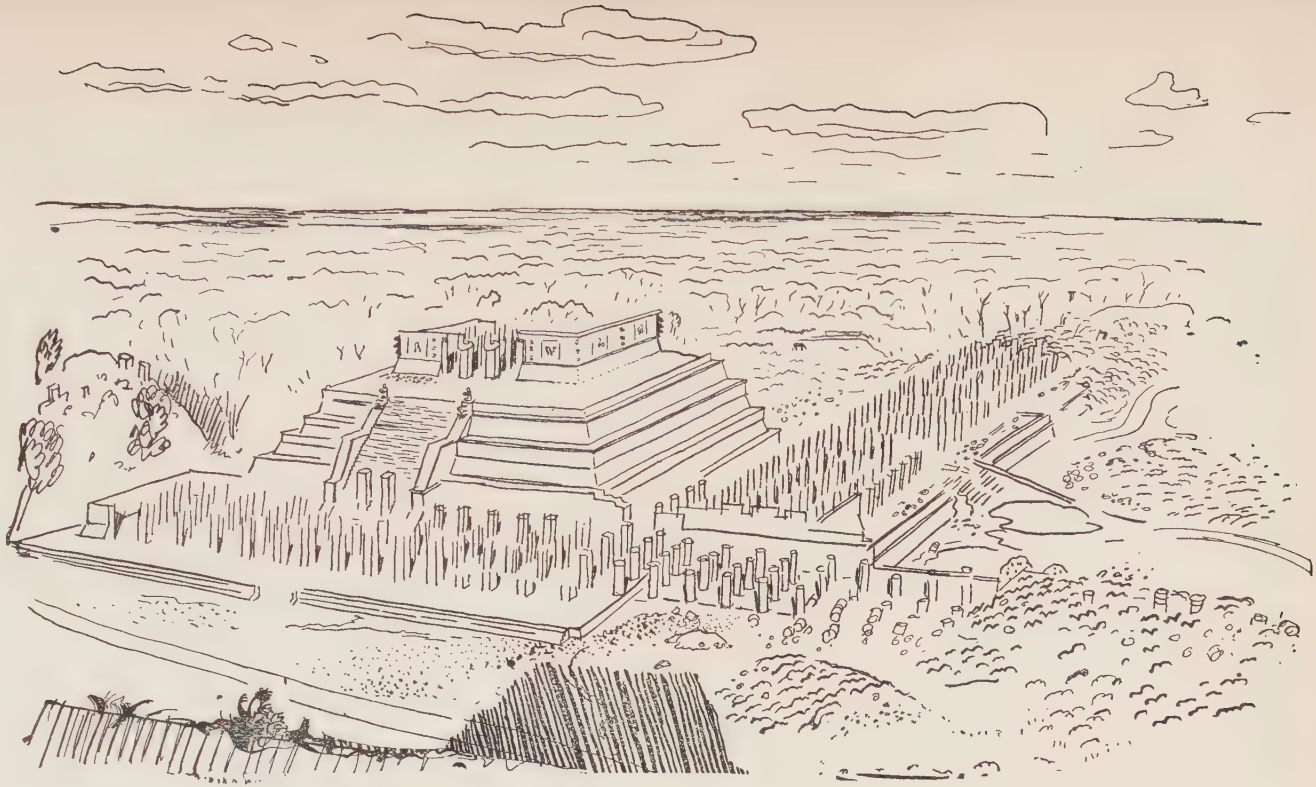
## II

# *AT THE MAYAN MECCA*

TROPICAL exploring was once — indeed, until a very few years ago — accompanied by heartbreak, backache, and ticks. In the Yucatan jungles, white-dotted with shining but irretrievably lost cities, the traveller suffered most, aside from heat and fevers, from the virulent tick known as the garrapata. But now the explorer in Yucatan goes tickless.

He rises in the soft but strangely chilly pre-dawn of Merida; has his *café con leche y pan dulce,* coffee with milk and sugared bread; and rides softly in a high-pooped Meridan cab to the railway station where he boards a miniature train filled with women, all in clean and flowing white, having the grave faces of the gentler Roman senators, and with little brown men having at one extremity an enormous, decorated straw sombrero and at the other sandals tied with twine to small, shapely feet. Their deportment is perfect. They mind their own business with unusual ability.

The little train spins cheerfully through dry miles of grey and green Yucatan jungle-bush. Passengers sleep; the women draw their *rebozos,* shawls, no two colored alike, farther over their eyes; the men drop their heads back and snore candidly



*Temple of the Warriors and Thousand Columns, Chichen Itza*

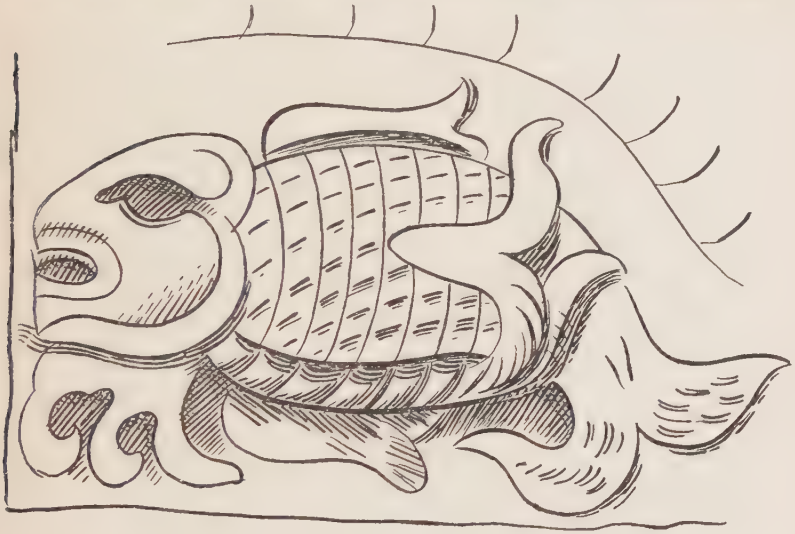
through plump open lips occasionally edged with a bit of black mustache. There is no staring; no rudeness; the Yucatecans, extraordinary people that they are, do not quiz, catechize, or otherwise harass each other without cause. The conductor is always affable. He does not forget to call you when your station arrives, and waves an *adiós* with a flash of fine teeth.

For five hours you ride through henequen fields, heat shimmers, and cactus, and then you dismount at Dzitas, once a village with palm-thatched huts sleeping under hibiscus blooms and cocoanut leaves. It still has these, but has become more metropolitan now, being the receiving and shipping point for the Carnegie Institution, which has undertaken to excavate and restore the chief buildings at Chichen-Itza, twenty miles distant. Here, a thousand years ago, was the Mecca of all devout Mayans and at one time their queen city.

At Dzitas you no longer hire from the nearest hacienda horses or mules to carry you over the liana-crossed trail to Chichen-Itza; you hire a *fotingo,* as Mr. Henry Ford's hard-working Model T is affectionately called by all Latin-America. The metal of this veteran car is wrapped with wire. Wire or string drops from its top to all parts in need of support. It resembles Brooklyn Bridge seen from a distance. Its tires are in ribbons. It is driven by a neat little Indian, in short white trousers over which hangs the long, close-fitting Yucatan undershirt. You bargain about the fare. He accepts a third less than he originally asked. While he fills his steaming radiator, you hunt for a thirst-quencher, for you know the ride will be hot and dusty. On the station platform stands your man. For a few centavos he will serve you pineapple or papaya

crushed in ice or the iced juice of a green cocoanut, all unspeakably delicious.

At last you are off. Off is the word, for you seldom touch the ground except when an unusually large boulder projects from the road. Your Indian driver simply opens the throttle and



*Fish Carved in Bas-relief, Chichen Itza*

steers reasonably clear of chickens, pigs, turkeys and loose donkeys. But at the outskirts of the village he halts. It is a cantina. Will you have beer or something? No, then, with your permission, he will. He returns, wiping his wisp of a mustache, but not alone. This is a friend who lives on the road to Chichen. He would like to ride with us; otherwise he would have to walk, carrying his bundles of chickens, turkeys and dry goods.

Very well; he is welcome; let him pay in proportion to the length of his ride.

But unfortunately, señor, he has no money.

You suspect something is behind all this and shake your head with a carefully cultivated, hard-boiled finality.

The friend is pushed away. The chauffeur turns to his crank, but his countenance is sunken. The friend stands back mournfully.

Oh well, if he is a good friend of yours, tell him to come along.

Two faces lighten instantaneously. In hops the friend, sticking chickens and turkeys in odd corners. The *fotingo* starts with a rush over the straight, relatively improved road and does not slacken for an hour. We are halted by a flat tire. While the two *Indios* sweat over it, you step out into the road. The heat quivers from flattened boulders of limestone. The bush is a solidly woven texture mostly grey in color, for the rains are still two months off. Two parakeets rise chattering in the air. The long-tailed Mexican jay screams from a tree. Iguanas crash into the bush. The air is speckled with drifting butterflies in blue, green, and black. Beside the road is a round spot two feet across. It is composed of dead butterflies. They lie not heaped upon each other, but side by side. Each is intact, but all are dead. What could have killed them? The earth is slightly moist. Did they drink up some poisonous dew? You cannot guess; it is one of those mysteries of which all jungles are full.

You start again with an even more furious speed. Rocks and ruts — your Indian takes them all with a little extra gasoline. Butterflies are dashed into your face and fall into your lap, quivering as they die. Their under-wings are marked with a crimson streak startlingly like blood.

At last comes a sudden bend in the road and a steep pyramid looms between the trees. It is crowned with a low, square, flat-

*Before a Shrine*

topped building which appears glistening white in the Yucatan sun. You recognize it at once. It is the *Castillo* of Chichen-Itza, the loftiest structure in the Mayan Mecca, so placed that approaching pilgrims could see it from miles away.

We are alone among the gods of ancient days. Though it is not yet noon, the workers on the restoration project have gone dripping to their shower baths. The sun is too withering to permit white men to toil under it between the hours of 11 a. m. and 4 p. m. But at the moment a breeze has arisen that cools the air enough to make possible a tour of the ruins whose contents are as yet imperfectly known.

## II

On our left are row after row of shining white pillars, marking the site of the Court of a Thousand Columns. Behind them rises the terraced majesty of the Temple of the Warriors, the most splendid structure yet uncovered in the city that was once lost but has been found again. The entrance is guarded by two gigantic Feathered Serpents in stone, their gaping jaws resting upon the floor, their curled tails once reaching the roof. The unending sculptures which cover walls and pillars, the vast amount of masonry, must have required the labor of hundreds of artists and thousands of slaves.

On our right is the Temple of the Jaguars, around which runs a frieze of sculptured jaguars, once richly painted and so instinct with the graceful, stealthy movement of life that one's

eyes return to them again and again, even though irresistibly diverted by the weird sights of an exotic land — muscular iguanas flattened against heat-quivering walls, their heads thrust into a crack for shade; a solemn procession of leaf-cutting ants crossing the path, their burdens carried by the edge like so many sails; the hoots and whistles of tropical birds; the long-necked zopilote, the Latin-American buzzard, cutting the air in graceful spirals.

Attached to this delicately sculptured temple are high walls enclosing a long and imposing rectangular stadium. Here was played the sacred game of *tlaxtli,* which on festal days attracted thousands of eager fanatics. It is improbable, however, that they yelled, or indulged in the other antics of American football fans; rather did they preserve a sacred silence resembling that of English spectators at a cricket match.

The ball is plainly sculptured on the temple walls. It was made of crude rubber and was apparently dimpled somewhat like a huge golf ball. On opposite sides of the long walls hung, twenty feet from the ground, great stone rings four feet in diameter. One of them has fallen, but the other is still in place. Both are engraved on their flattened sides with a design of intertwined serpents. The game seems to have resembled a combination of hand ball and basket ball. Its object was to drive the ball through the rings. Skilled players were allowed to strike the ball with their hips only, wearing leather protectors for this purpose. A clean goal must have been a rarity and the successful *jugador* received special honors. A court of the same kind existed in Mexico City, where games were played before Montezuma.

From the Castillo stretches a stone-laid causeway, Gothic-

arched now, as it must have been then, with grey-trunked trees. This was the Via Sacra, or sacred path to the Cenote de los Sacrificios, an awesome well over one hundred feet across and sunk a hundred and fifty feet deep through stratum after stratum of grey, blackened, root-hung limestone. When the milpas, cornfields, were parched and the heavens were as brass, certain persons were selected by the priest to be sacrificed to the Rain-God. If the drought were severe, the ecclesiastic choice fell on virgins. At daybreak a preliminary ceremony was held on the steps of the Castillo, where all might see.

Followed a solemn march, slow, funereal, down through the overhanging trees to the great rocks on the brink of the grey and black Cenote. Here, one by one, the young women, many of them, if we may judge by the remnant of their tribe left today, delicately formed and Oriental of feature, were hurled into the deep water seventy feet below. After them were flung jewels of gold, jade and turquoise. Ornaments of this description have been dredged up within recent years. At the sound of each falling body, prayers were chanted and magic litanies uttered.

Hidden behind the ever-climbing bush are three more impressive buildings. One of them is the only round structure found at Chichen, the Caracol, or astronomical tower, from which observations were taken and calculations made that have caused modern mathematicians to take off their hats to the Mayan calendrists. Another is the House of the Dark Writing, a long low squat building with parallel rows of windowless cells. A third is the most ornate structure in Chichen: the House of the Monjas or Nuns. Here the Mayan sculptors gave themselves free rein and covered the exterior with exuberant,

if carefully executed, decorations. It was this building, with its numerous curved noses or tongues projected from row upon row of serpents' faces, that caused an early explorer to proclaim to the world his belief that the Mayans were Asiatic in origin, since in his opinion these curled projections represented elephants' trunks. Scarcely less pronounced is an imitation of lattice work, or X design, cut into the stone.

## III

The Mayan sculptor, culturally speaking, was a barbarian. He belonged to the Stone Age. All his tools were of stone, flint, or obsidian; and yet with these crude instruments he was able to cut lines scarcely surpassed for delicacy and grace. To feathers in an ornate headdress, for instance, he could impart the utmost airiness. His chief weakness was a tendency to overcrowd his space. He could not abide a vacuum, nor did he know how to make it a part of his design. Wherever he found an empty corner he filled it with hieroglyphs or symbolic decorations. Wherever he erred or slipped, the painter came to his rescue. It must be remembered that Mayan architectural sculpture, which is largely in bas-relief, was intended only to provide a design to which masses of color were to be applied.

All the buildings in this religious capital were richly painted on their exteriors as well as sculptured. Surrounded as they seem to have been with terraced banks of tropical flowers, the effect on the pilgrim, coming from his palm-thatched home in

the parched bush, must have been dazzling beyond description.

It is plain that Chichen, which was dominated by the priestly craft, was laid out so as to awe and impress. The city as a whole covered a space of two square miles, including Chichen-Itza and

*Gargoyle from the Museum, Merida*

the earlier group of structures known as Old Chichen. Each building was constructed, with every appearance of solidity and permanence, upon a mound or terraced pyramid filled with rubble and faced with cut stone. The pilgrim, approaching over Yucatan's low, flat miles of sand, bush, and limestone

outcroppings, could not doubt that here was the Eternal City. In the distance its grey buildings shone white and dazzling. As he came nearer, he could distinguish their bands of color — blue, red, green and yellow. A walk through surrounding glades of trees, interspersed with sacred cornfields, brought him into a city whose temples towered far above his head, sharply outlined against a sky of intense blue, and with every detail distinct in a transparent atmosphere.

Here he found everything which could provide him with a complete emotional *Katharsis* — bloody human sacrifices to arouse his terror, processions to gratify his love of spectacle, cavernous temples to provoke his awe, naturalistic representations of gods to create his submission, and ball games to divert and excite him. Around the outskirts of the holy ground was a considerable city composed of homes much like those in which Mayas live today — palm-thatched huts made of poles daubed with mud, floors of beaten earth, and with hammocks for beds.

## IV

Chichen Itza was settled, about eight hundred years before Columbus discovered America, by the Itza tribe of Mayans, who called it "Chi-Chen," from "Chi," mouth, and "Chen," well, or Mouth of Wells. Almost exactly a thousand years ago they mysteriously abandoned it. The precise reason never has been determined, owing to the destruction of the Mayan records by the Spanish bishop Diego de Landa, who regarded

them as the unholy chronicles of a devilish paganism. Various hypotheses have ascribed the desertion of the city to a persistent plague; to the orders of priests who believed they had discovered omens threatening to the future of the city; and to increasing starvation due to the exhaustion of the surrounding soil. The plough and the use of fertilizers are even at this date virtually unknown on the Yucatan peninsula. The rural Indian clears a patch of ground by burning it off and plants his corn by making holes for it with a thrust of a stick. The humus in most parts is only a few scant inches deep. Below that is the hard rock of ages.

In the middle of the thirteenth century the Itzas returned to Chichen as mysteriously as they had left it, and upon its re-occupation the city flourished more grandly than ever, becoming the religious capital of the new Mayan empire, while Uxmal, to the southwest, became the political capital.

About thirty years before the coming of Columbus, prolonged civil war broke out and the Itzas were worsted. They then abandoned Chichen forever and moved to the forests of Guatemala. They left the painted city to be inhabited only by the iguana, the tick, the army ant, and the buzzard, and in time to be overwhelmed by the bush through which ran the jaguar and the spotted ocelot. Tropical vegetation, so long kept underfoot by the heavy stones of the Mayan builders, came back with a rush. Roots and lianas, at first yellow-green and tender, pushed their way gradually through mortarless crevices, until they became strong and brown. Then with the pressure exerted by sap and expanding cells, they rose up and felled to the ground all but the most solid and best balanced masonry.

Lintels, hewn out of the tremendously resistant zapote wood, in time rotted away, allowing the walls above them to pour down in cascades.

At the foot of every mound lay sculptured serpents' heads and the broken limbs of gods, priests, and warriors in painted stone. Today many of these heaps of graven stones lie just as

*Maya Arch and Castillo Entrance*

they fell. The Thousand Columns were buried deep under dust and the matted bush. Streets and even paths disappeared, and Chichen became a "lost" city, known only to silent Indians until a wandering explorer found it again about seventy-five years ago. Since that time the work of explorers and archæologists is gradually unravelling what once appeared to be one of the irretrievably knotted mysteries of ancient American life.

That Chichen and other Mayan centers are so remarkably preserved today, despite the attacks of time and the jungle, is due to three factors: the absence of frost, which can rend even the hugest boulders; the erection of buildings on tall mounds which impeded the encroachment of vegetation; and the feature of Mayan building for which their architects have been most criticized — the " false " or triangular arch, sometimes called the American arch, to distinguish it from the round or Roman arch.

The Mayan never knew the principle of the keystone, hence it never occurred to him that an arch might have a rounded top. He simply carried up his walls to a certain height and then began to draw them together by " stepping " one stone upon another. As soon as these inner walls almost touched, he capped them with a slab of stone, thus forming a large A or truncated triangle. The result was a building curiously narrow but unlimited in length. This method was immensely wasteful of stone and labor, but it is unlikely the Mayan cared about either sufficiently to economize in it. His stone was quarried, worked, and erected by slaves, of whom he captured thousands in battle. However defective these arches appear to be from the modern architect's viewpoint, their sheer weight of stone gives them an enormous solidity, and to them is largely due the preservation of Mayan cities in the relatively sound state in which they exist today.

The Mayan sculptors, painters and calligraphers were very apt in portraying the racial physiognomy. What are evidently faithful portraits in bas-relief indicate that the Mayans were a well-formed but stocky people with smooth, yellowish skins and a plumpness which concealed their high muscular de-

velopment. Their most conspicuous facial characteristic was a curving and sometimes hooked Roman nose through which the men wore a long plug frequently tufted at the ends. Their foreheads slanted sharply backward, due to the practice of binding boards on the heads of infants. They were also virtually devoid of chin, so that the face came to a point at the lips, which were thick and projecting, the lower lip sometimes slightly pendulous.

They were fond of wearing elaborate costumes and felt most imposing when masquerading as birds, animals or reptiles. They cured the skins whole and warriors thrust their heads through the open mouths of alligators or jaguars to appear in dances or processions. Most attention was paid to the headdress which was of towering height, containing feathers or flowers which fell over in graceful loops behind their backs. Another conspicuous feature of their dress was a broad girdle whose ends made aprons in front and behind. A similar apron, the *maxtli,* is worn by their descendants today. It is usually made of blue cotton cloth and protects the white trousers of laborers when at work.

A short mantle was sometimes worn over the shoulders of Mayan warriors. It was a network of leather and had angular ends which somewhat resembled modern epaulets. Leggings, wrist-guards and anklets were also common, and their short, plump feet were always protected by sandals with unusually high backs. Tattooing on the face and body was freely indulged in, and the incisor teeth were frequently filed to a sharp point. In fact, there was scarcely any part of his body which the Mayan did not adorn and decorate for festal occasions. He liked a good show and contributed himself to it with enthusiasm.

Fighting men wore armor of quilted cotton, made of two layers with sand or salt packed between. It afforded good protection against light missiles, but was of course worse than useless when the Spaniards came with their bullets. Mayan warriors carried spears and short clubs of wood into which flints were fitted like saw-teeth. These weapons could inflict terrible wounds and were capable of cutting off a man's head at a blow. Their spears, headed with chipped flint, were of two lengths — one as long as a man, and the other short and pointed somewhat like an arrow. The bow and arrow were late arrivals in Mayan life and were probably borrowed, as were many other institutions, from the Mexicans of the North.

The early Mayans were not a pugnacious people and preferred to attend to their crops, promote their religious affairs, and develop the arts of peace. But a change came after contact with the Toltecs and Aztecs of the North. Wars then became more frequent, but the Mayan never developed into a slayer on a large scale. It was his object to capture his enemies rather than to kill them; captives were not only sacred to the Mayan gods, but carried out the heavy labor of temple construction, and furnished the subjects for the elaborate human sacrifices which the Mayans celebrated with imposing ceremonies. On sacrificial days the priests painted themselves blue, which was a sacred color. Their victims were also painted blue on the nose and around the eyes, the rest of the body being sometimes decorated with vertical red stripes.

Mayan women, though devout, took little active part in religious affairs, and did not mingle with or eat with men in public. They dressed with far less splendor than the proud and exuberant male. They wore no clothing above the waist except

an occasional short shoulder mantle. Their skirts came below the knee. As a screen from the sun they tossed a rebozo over their heads, and used the same garment to make a back-sling in which to carry the baby. Domestic scenes pictured on various walls reveal Maya women living in the same palm-thatched houses, making the same tortillas, and wearing the same rebozos that characterize their descendants today. In a thousand years the Indian women of Yucatan have not changed their essential habits.

Their sculptures, paintings, and picture-writings make it plain that the Mayas possessed a civilization far in advance of any other existing at the time on the North American continent. Their architectural planning and building indicate that they were a strong, progressive and imaginative people singularly gifted not only in the practice of the arts but the sciences. No one can stand among Mayan ruins and gaze upon their fallen Babylons without feeling that it was a misfortune to human history that their rise was broken short, like a mutilated stump, and that they were not permitted to complete their rounded cycle in the expansion of civilization.

## III

# *THE SEARCH FOR THE GREAT STONE FACE*

THE Great Stone Face of Izamal. We had heard of it as one of the wonders of Yucatan; it was fixed in the side of a mountain and was almost as big; it had the inscrutable expression of the Egyptian Sphinx and was better preserved. True, Stephens, who visited Izamal about 1842 and saw the Face, was more temperate as regards its size, but his description was sufficiently interesting:

"It is seven feet eight inches in height and seven feet in width. The ground-work is of projecting stones, which are covered with stucco. A stone one foot six inches long protrudes from the chin, intended, perhaps, for burning copal on, as a sort of altar. It was the first time we had seen an ornament of this kind upon the exterior of any of these structures. In sternness and harshness of expression it reminded us of the idols at Copan, and its colossal proportions, with the corresponding dimensions of the mound, gave an unusual impression of grandeur."

The mound mentioned here is one of eight which on the wide flat plain that supports Izamal do indeed appear to be mountain high. They undoubtedly supported the temples and

other buildings which composed the old Indian town, whose chief was a mighty man named Ulil. Legend says the town's original name was Itzamal, so called after the Itza tribe which dominated this region.

As soon as we reached Izamal, we inquired for the location of the Great Stone Face. Two Indian lads could only shake their heads and say, " It is not here."

" It is not here? Then where is it? "

They did not know. Further inquiry brought out the saddening information that the Great Stone Face of Izamal is no more. Several years ago the family whose backyard contained the Face, which was built into the stone-work supporting the base of a mound, became annoyed by the increasing stream of curious visitors and destroyed it!

A similar fate has overtaken other Mayan monuments. The modern Yucateco has little regard for his country's antiquities, and the Indian is prone to regard them either as a source of building stone or a nuisance. Worked stones with Maya inscriptions have been found in the cornices of modern buildings, and one rare stone was found, miles from its place of origin, doing duty as a support for a horse-trough. Knowledge of such incidents causes visiting archæologists to moan in their sleep.

## II

THOUGH mourning the destruction of the Face, there was compensation for us in the discovery in this time-worn old town,

so Spanish in some respects, so Indian in others, of the only specimen of his kind extant — an American doctor who was born in Yucatan and brought up as a Yucatecan. Noting the American name on his shingle, we stopped at his office, filled with shiny-eyed Indians, to extend greetings.

Dr. G. turned out to be a tall, spare, blond man of forty-six years, simple and hearty in his manner, the son of an Indiana physician who, having a taste for natural history, came to Yucatan years ago to study its plant and animal life. Before completing his stay, he was commissioned by the British Museum to gather and send to it a collection of Yucatecan fauna and flora, including the smallest humming bird in the world, a creature with a body no larger than one's little fingernail. It took ten years to form the collection, but at last it was complete, and was shipped to England on a sailing vessel. In mid-ocean the ship caught fire and burned to the waves' edge. Everything on board was lost, including the collection. The doctor at once started another, in time completing it and shipping it safely. Meantime, he had settled down to practice in Yucatan, where his children were brought up. He has since published a four-volume study of the plants, birds, insects and animals of the peninsula, issued in Spanish by the Mexican government.

On the father's retirement, the son, who had obtained his medical education in the States, took up his practice, much of it being among the natives, whose language he speaks fluently. He told us that modern Mayas suffer chiefly from grippe and amœbic dysentery. There is also some pellagra. But their vitality is, in general, astonishing.

One of his recent patients had been an old Indian woman

eighty-two years old. In her backyard she had kept a yearling bull, tied out to graze. One day she went out to move the animal which, though previously mild-tempered, suddenly turned on her and gored her through and through. She fell to the ground, where the bull attacked her again, lacerating her so furiously that her intestines fell out. It was in this condition that her relatives found her. They placed her in a hammock, but dared not touch her otherwise, and called the doctor. Though deeming the case hopeless, he washed and replaced the viscera, which happened not to be torn, sewed up the wounds, and asking her people to notify him when she had expired, made out the death certificate. The relatives came to report, as requested; but instead of announcing her death, they voiced her complaint that she was receiving an insufficiency to eat! Two months later she was not only alive but on the road to recovery.

Both the doctor's hands were badly scarred. One wound came from an alligator's bite, the other from a giant ray's barb, both animals being at the time supposedly dead. The alligator had been harpooned and hauled into the doctor's boat while he was fishing with natives off the coast. With expiring energy the brute bit through his left hand, severing a vein.

Bad as this was, the other wound was much more serious. The doctor and his native companions had found basking in the warm Gulf water a giant sting-ray, one of those marine beasts with a broad, flat body and a poisonous barb sheathed in its tail, which grow to monstrous dimensions in tropical waters. They killed it and towed it to land where the doctor, then young and inquisitive, intended to dissect it. As the ray was apparently lifeless, he took hold of it by the tail to drag

it up on the beach. The beast, with a galvanic effort, drove his barb through the young physician's right hand, where it broke off. The sting-ray's dart is covered with a poisonous slime and is so constructed that it can be drawn through flesh in only one direction. There was no remedy at hand except brandy, and of this the doctor drank copiously, to maintain his circulation, while the Indians opened the back of his hand and drew out the barb. He then lay down to give battle to the poison. For seven hours he was violently ill, his body seeming for part of the time to be on fire and again as cold as if packed in ice. It was two days before he recovered sufficiently to be taken home, and he was ailing for three months afterward.

On recovering completely, he experienced a marked aversion from all forms of sea food, of which previously he had been very fond. Eventually he tried a dish of oysters, but the very taste of them caused severe nausea, and his repulsion for sea food persisted for seventeen years longer.

## III

We felt it to be good fortune when the doctor laid aside his work for half a day and joined us for a trip through the bush to a henequen plantation; for with his enthusiastic interest in all forms of Yucatecan life, he was teaching us more in a minute than we would otherwise learn in a week. He pointed out the boneta tree, with pods flanged like an arrow head; a silk-cotton tree three feet in diameter at the base, whose bolls bear

a soft, curly fiber; a lemonillo, bearing the green limes of commerce; a ciruela, whose cherries are green when ripe, and finally a bitter-orange and sweet-orange tree grafted together by the native method. A young tree of the bitter variety is planted near a larger sweet one. When their limbs begin to mingle, they are broken off and their ends tied together, the joint being plastered over with clay. The sweet orange being the stronger, its sap compels the bitter tree to yield sweet fruit.

We came upon a clearing where the little golden bees of Yucatan were drinking themselves to death on the odorous blossoms of the flor de Mayo, Mayflower tree. Their native owner took us behind his house to show us their hives — short lengths of hollow logs, stopped at the ends with clay and piled up like cordwood. In Yucatan you do not eat honey but drink it. The native showed us how. Picking up a hive-log, he made a hole in it, bidding us lift and drink. We did so, and the honey ran out like water.

Owing perhaps to the hot climate, Yucatecan bees do not build solid hexagonal cells like their burly cousins of the North. The liquid honey would not stay in such structures. Instead, they make large, multiple cysts, somewhat like the nests of bumblebees.

The doctor being an enthusiastic apiarist, he once imported a colony of bees from the States. The queen was seventeen days making the journey, and though her majesty was sadly jolted and arrived in a temper, she was soon mollified and at once set about the creation of a large family. Nearby was a colony of native bees, who were surprised and made indignant one day when the Americans — doubtless wearing horn-rimmed glasses and talking through their noses — swarmed over and

robbed them. The native bees complained to the government, but when nothing, as usual, was done, they girded their loins and went over and robbed the Americans. While the unpleasantness lasted, neither colony did any collecting but spent their whole time robbing and re-robbing each other. Their owner had to break up the cross-raiding by moving the warring colonies far apart.

## IV

As we passed one of the outlying Izamal mounds, we witnessed a sudden battle between a spider and an army ant. The ant had appeared from around a corner and poked his head into a small crevice. He must have made a noise or dislodged a grain of sand, or perhaps he truculently shouted a challenge into the darkness; at any rate the spider, of the same color as the rock and the same size as the intruder, bounded out from a side exit and began a search. His bristling demeanor plainly said: "Who is it prowling around here? Doesn't he know this is private property?"

As soon as he spied the reconnoitering ant, he rushed upon him. The two little insects rolled over and over, separated, and rushed together again. They fought over a field of about four square inches, the ant wildly clashing his hooked mandibles and the spider no less wildly trying to use his dagger. Neither seemed able to get a permanent grip on the other or reach a vital spot. At last in the midst of a locked wrestle the spider saw an opening and sank his sting in the ant's stomach. In-

stantly the ant rolled over dead and slowly slid down a slope, finally tumbling over a precipice, at the bottom of which he lay motionless. The spider looked gloatingly over the edge and, still wildly excited, searched his estate for other possible trespassers before turning back to his castle with an air that said: "If there are any more of those bandits around here annoying peaceful citizens, they will get the same medicine."

This was not our first sight of Yucatan's formidable insects, and we had many times tried to see if we could break up the long lines of leaf-cutting ants, seen everywhere in tropical Mexico, each of which carries his burden on edge, so that they present the appearance of a fleet embarking under tiny green sails. Each ant can be lifted by his sail, the edge of which he carries between his strong mandibles while he balances the leaf, which may be several times his weight, across his back; but he holds on with terrier-like persistence, and if lifted to a tree limb, he in time makes his way back to the ground and rejoins his toiling brethren, still grasping his bit of green.

In planted areas their appearance is greeted with horror, for they will cut a garden or orchard to pieces unless headed off by water or fire. In Yucatan it is common to see wells with broad stone tops trenched through the middle and carrying a moat of water. This is to keep out the ants who are capable of marching solemnly down the interior of the well and dropping into the water by millions, simply because no order is given to halt.

One day I was standing within a Mayan ruin, wondering at the number of wasps' nests on the walls, when a few army ants, a half inch long, climbed up, cautiously inspected the nests laden with grubs, and withdrew. These must have been scouts. Doubtless they submitted a glowing report to the com-

manders keeping their divisions marking time outside, for in a few minutes the army appeared at three different doors of the building. On reaching the perpendicular walls it deployed and sent up half a dozen narrow lines. These lines were escorted and kept in order by large ants carrying much heavier mandibles, acting as officers, flank guards, and military police.

The shock troops which led the advance rushed upon the nests and began tearing at the cell covers. The parent wasps at once realized the danger, set up a shrill buzzing, and furiously attacked the ants with jaws, feet, and stingers. For a moment they successfully fought off the advance guard, but the first narrow lines were now widening from two to four, six, and a dozen ants abreast, and the supporting regiments were pouring over the thresholds below in rivers.

I followed these lines back and found them blackening the steep stone steps and terraces all the way down to the ground, where their starting place was obscured under low bushes and piles of stone fallen from the ruin. I put obstacles such as sticks and stones across their paths, but they surmounted these without even losing step. A shallow trench likewise gave them no trouble, but a deeper one, with vertical walls two inches high, threw them into confusion. They fell into it by hundreds and seemed unable to climb out except after much delay. Latecomers gathered on the edge of the trench in a thick black line, waving their mandibles and feelers. Officers and guards came hurrying up, ran around in circles, conferred, and went away. They evidently reported the serious depth of the trench back to the high command, which doubtless gave out the necessary orders, for the marching line began to thin and then disappear. A new road had been located three feet away, and over this

the army was now rushing, to the entire disregard of my trench.

By the time I returned to the ruin, half the wasps' nests had been mopped up. Resisting owners were seized by wing or leg, buried under knots of swarming ants, and torn limb from limb. The nests were overwhelmed, cut to bits, and looted. The pieces fell at the foot of the walls like rain. Even the stumps of the nests were sheared off and demolished. Soon there was an emptiness and silence where a few minutes before there had been a humming and active wasp city.

## V

YUCATAN's welfare depends on henequen, the American agave related to the cactus which produces the sisal rope of commerce. It is odd that in a soil so thin and stony that other plants maintain themselves upon it with difficulty, henequen grows green and stout, loving the sun and miraculously extracting from the dry, calcareous sand sufficient moisture to make its great sword-like blades fat and pulpy. Its fibers were known to the Mayan builders, who twisted them into ropes with which to haul the vast stones of their temples.

It is grown on great plantations, " fincas," having something over one thousand plants to the acre which radiate in spiky rows from the Big House or hacienda, where dwells the owner or manager in what was, up to a few years ago, a patriarchal, semi-feudal style. If the *haciendado* was a good man, his Indian

workers planted and gathered the henequen crop patiently year after year, looking to him for all their needs. If he was brutal and grasping, the work went on just the same, except that there were occasional outbursts of burnings and killings. The Revolution laid the foundation for a change which is not yet complete, but under which the Government protects the worker, and his own Leagues of Resistance, or labor unions, regulate his hours and wages.

At any hacienda the stranger is welcome, for time sometimes drags heavily through the long Yucatecan day, and the owner is eager for news. We were several times entertained at these haciendas, which usually sit, cool and somnolent, in a cluster of trees and windmills. At one a few miles from Izamal, the managers and foremen put aside everything to show us the expensive machinery which grinds up the leaves, extracts the pulp, separates the fiber, and twists it, when dried and bleached, into rope and cordage.

Afterwards they brought us to the great arched veranda, cool under its thick stones, and sent a boy up a palm for cocoanuts from which to drink. They introduced us to the oldest worker on the place, a grizzled Indian whose brown skin was burnt almost black by over three-fourths of a century of sun, but his withered arms and legs were still fit for active work. He took off his torn sombrero and bowed to us with a pathetic dignity, walling the whites of his eyes at us like an old hound that fears he may not be spoken to gently.

During the World War the price of henequen soared and planters became rich. Then came the slump and the reaction. Governor Felipe Carillo, the former train-brakeman, was captured and shot, his body being thrown beside those

of his three brothers. Men were assassinated at night in their homes and town plazas were fouled with swinging corpses.

In any state of Mexico the fragrance which rides the breeze bears at its end the charnel odor of history, and the gayest music is threaded with a chord of mourning. Even in Yucatan, whose people love pleasure and have no taste for blood, life wears over its shoulder the arm of death. In the tropics there is no annual pageant of spring with its shouting promise, no winter with its kindly rest. There are only two seasons, the wet and the dry, and decay hangs from the same limb that blossoms. Death works beside life in order that life may not be drowned in its own plenitude. Under the spur of moist heat, Nature, with a trowel in one hand and a knife in the other, has no time and no mercy, hurrying that each job may be rushed to completion and then cut down to serve as a base for a new structure. By such a close alternation of life and death men are bound to be influenced in their thoughts. Throughout Mexico we heard two words used more often than any others. They were "bonito," pretty, and "triste," sad. A thing is one or the other, and sometimes it is both.

## VI

The venerable plaza at Izamal is surrounded on three sides by stone arcades of rose-red and white, the Hispano-Moorish arches being high and beautifully proportioned. In one of these

arcades we found the town's only public restaurant, kept by a Chinaman, and there we dined al fresco on savory dishes prepared by the cook, an Indian lad about 16 years old. Before we realized it, we were holding a levée. A number of the inhabitants, friendly and full of curiosity, came up, asked if we had had a good day, and told us of sights in the vicinity which we ought not to miss. They spoke in Spanish, but three of them addressed us in good English.

One of these was a dapper young man who had been graduated from Fordham University, New York, and was a specialist in plant chemistry at a nearby hacienda. He shook his head mournfully over his country and said it was very slow.

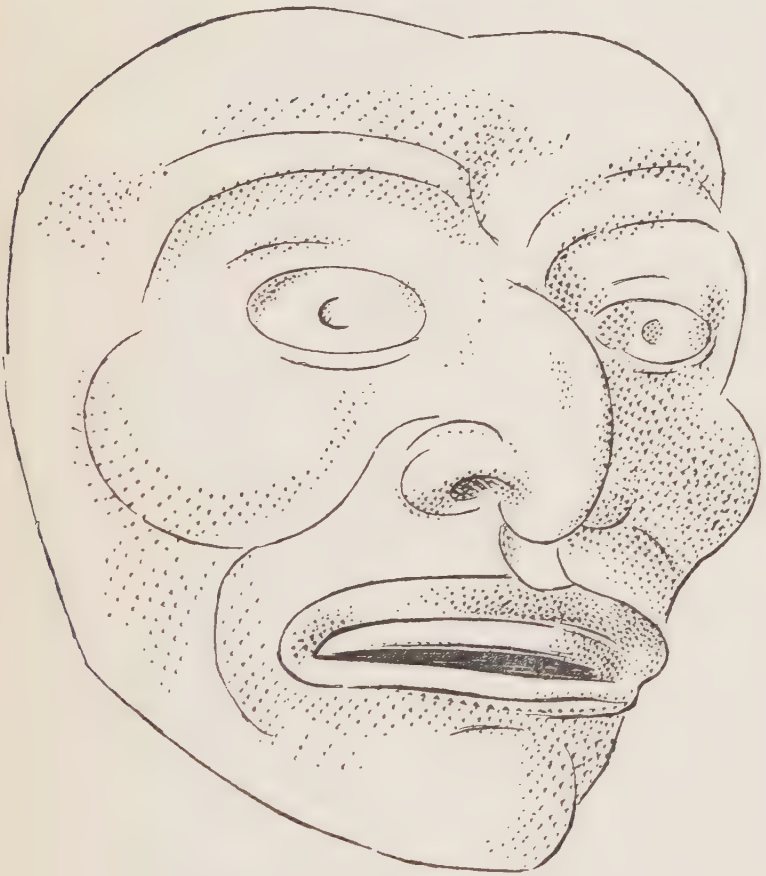
Another young man informed us that he had lived in the States and remarked with some pride that he had acquired an American wife. They had a little boy, who was an indubitable Yankee — restless and impudent. He was quite different from the neighbors' children, the father said; the latter were quiet, subdued, and obedient. He was not sure what his son would be like when he was older.

" He may turn out to be a gangster or a hold-up man," we suggested.

The young father grinned and said he hoped God would forbid, but there was a shade of anxiety in his face. The murders, robberies, and other violent crimes committed in the States are invariably featured in the Mexican press, and sometimes to pick up a Mexican newspaper is to be convinced that the United States is an excessively wild and dangerous country, where residents of cities are not safe in the streets at night and where the possession of money or jewels invites sudden death:

all very different from peaceful, somnolent Mexico where murder is sporadic but not continuous.

A third visitor invited us to come around the corner and visit his distillery, where he was manufacturing habanero from cane



*Maya Pottery Mask, Yucatan*

juice. He said that with a friend he had once lived for a time in Washington, D. C. They knew no English and the only dish they recognized on restaurant menus was shredded wheat

and milk. Three times a day they ate shredded wheat and milk until a wild emptiness gnawed at their interiors and they were unable to sleep. Their increasing hunger set up an irritation which caused them to pick flaws in each other and a friendship of years' standing was threatened with disruption. In their craving for meat, they thought of strangling a cat and cooking it in their bedroom over a gas jet. At last, greatly daring, they visited another restaurant and pointed out another dish on the menu. By signs they asked that it be fetched quickly. This turned out to be corn flakes and milk.

## VII

During these conversations a small mestiza woman had passed through the arcade several times, back and forth, each time staring at us earnestly. We noticed her not only because of this, but because she wore a straw bonnet pulled over her eyes. It is rare to see a woman wearing a hat in this climate. She also wore eyeglasses. At length she stopped at our table, leaned over it confidentially, and announced that she had seen God.

The Chinese proprietor hurried out on slippered feet and urged her to go away. He said he had been indulgent toward her in the past, but she must not interfere with distinguished guests from foreign lands. Vamos! But the lady drew herself up and denied interference; she had her manners, she said, even though she had been brought up in a town where the people

*Old Spanish Church among Flor de Mayo Trees, Yucatan*

were half Indian. We waved the Chinaman away and requested her to proceed. She then lowered her voice and added that she had not only seen God, but the Holy Virgin — several times. Where? In the cenote. There we could see for ourselves the candle smoke of seekers and believers; anyone would direct us.

Her eyes, enlarged by her glasses, widened with excitement as she plunged into a long discourse heated with religious fervor. Not only had she seen these visions, but in a dream she had seen hell itself, and she described the flame and smoke, the sulphurous smell, the gloating of the demons, and the groans of the damned. She knew nothing about us, and would not presume to criticize, but were we sure we would escape fiery damnation?

Meantime the Chinaman hovered around uneasily, and the cook came out to request us not to permit our venison to grow cold. A knot of loafers from the neighboring cantina clustered around, some gaping and others grinning. A few of them made covert remarks and tried to jeer. She whirled on them. Ignorant renegades from the faith, she called them, spending their little money on drink and godless music while their wives stayed cooped up at home, washing their one dress and mending their children's ragged clothes. She took off her hat, pointed it at them like an avenging weapon, and shrieked.

The Chinaman in the background made motions indicating that he would drive her away if we wished. We shook our heads. The cook overturned a heap of pots — purposely, we suspected — and a drunken fat man, with tears in his eyes, lurched over the table and embraced us as if to defend us from the accuser. Still she talked. In the twilight, dark women in

rebozos glided silently to the curb's edge, hushing their children with hands over their mouths. A few yards away a door to a motion picture theatre was thrown open, and in flowed the women on their soundless feet, mastering their eagerness with an enforced dignity of stride.

Still our preacheress talked. Her speech was not tedious. Her language was well chosen. Her features were delicately chiseled; she was cleanly dressed; only her excited eyes betrayed the fanatic. At length we rose to go. She checked herself and swallowed the rest of her speech with a visible effort. Would we take a message back with us to America? "Tell your rich capitalists to pay us five centavos more for each henequen bale and save us."

## VIII

Two little boys guided us to the cenote where the people went to look for the Virgin. It was a cave on the edge of a road, in the rainy season holding a pool from which the cattle drank. Its roof was thick with the crusted smoke from countless candles. The boys said the Virgin used to be seen there often, but since the church had been closed she did not come any more.

High atop the largest mound in the town sits the vast church and convent of the Franciscan monks, who began it in 1553. Its guardian was Diego de Landa, then an humble padre but afterwards the bishop who became notorious in history as the Spaniard who burned all the Maya records in a great heap in

front of the cathedral at Merida. He it was who brought the famous Virgin of Izamal from Guatemala, where the best image-makers in the Americas then lived. It was fetched on the backs of Indians. The devout Spaniards at Valladolid nearby cried out at the sacrilege, attacked the Indians, and took the image away from them. But the Virgin made herself so heavy that the Spaniards could not carry her, thereby signifying her intention of remaining at Izamal, which she did. The old Spanish records ascribe innumerable miracles and cures to her. But later the Virgin was burned in a great fire, and now the silent church and convent contain neither priest nor nun, for the keys are in the hands of a hostile government.

## IV

# *A WEEK WITH MAYAN HUNTERS*

MAYA life, although checked in its development and pushed back by the Spanish Conquest, is still active and healthy, and today Maya is the everyday speech of hundreds of thousands of comely people living in the states of Yucatan, Campeche, the Province of Quintana Roo, and other parts of southern Mexico. Even in the plazas of Merida, one can sit beneath the zapote trees and overhear the clipped, palatal speech, which makes much use of the uvula and the tongue pressed against the teeth, of the people who once built monumental cities in the jungle and worshipped the Feathered Serpent and the Red Tiger.

There are today areas in Mexico's southeastern peninsula where Maya is the predominating language and where Spanish is but little used and imperfectly known. One of these areas stretches for many miles along the north coast of Yucatan and contains vast tracts of dense bush and jungle unknown to any man except the native hunter, fisherman, and chicle gatherer. These districts will not long remain unpeopled, for the American flapper's yearning for chewing-gum is forcing the chiclero to range into this ever denser bush in his search for the fragrant gum exuded by the zapote tree.

At present, however, the chief inhabitants here are billions of the larger and more gorgeous aquatic birds, living peacefully among alligators, giant ray-fish, sharks, and various carnivores, such as the jaguar, ocelot, and ring-tailed cat. These birds enjoy tranquil homes on the innumerable islets — called the Thousand Islands of Yucatan, but there are probably nearer ten thousand of them — which, densely wooded, are strung along a white, calcareous coast like green beads, cut off from the mainland by a network of shallow and salty streams called ríos, or rivers.

Here we lived, hunted, and fished among modern Mayas for a week, dwelling in their palm-thatched huts, eating their food, sleeping on beds prepared by them, and talking, as best we could, their language.

Patient Loretto and Andres Marrufo, the Maya brothers who were our guides and hosts: how tired they must have become of our incessant "*Cómo se llama eso?*" in Spanish, and later "*Bish-uḳ-abar?*" in Maya, meaning "What do you call that?" But if they ever felt so, they gave no sign; always they were serene, good-humored, and unwearied; took us everywhere and showed us everything; refrained from laughing at our mistakes; and acted as though we were the efficient hunters and fishermen which we were not.

## II

To reach the tiny sea-coast village in which the Marrufos lived required a long journey by rail and a longer one through

the dense Yucatecan bush by a mule-car which runs over a miniature rail-track once a day, to enable the henequen planters along the route to get their mail and the natives to send their chickens, turkeys, eggs and fruits to market. Every few miles the mules were changed, for the car was driven along at a smart pace, amounting, with time out for stops, to as much as three miles per hour.

The other passengers were all natives. They nodded sleepily as the little car trundled on beneath the glaring Yucatecan sun, which in the dry season burns the bush to a uniform light grey, sprinkled with the green of those tropical plants which flourish amazingly even in the thin, baked soil that barely covers the almost solid limestone below. Two of the male passengers extended themselves on the back seats and slept, with straw sombreros drawn over their brown faces, but the women sat upright with the somewhat prim dignity characteristic of their sex in Yucatan.

All the women were dressed alike, wearing around their heads a rebozo, fringed at the ends, which serves Maya women as a hat, veil, sunshade, carry-all, and when necessary as a baby-sling. From their ears hung jingling pendants and around their throats were the necklaces of beads or gold chains which sometimes end in a lavish display of gold coins. Their arms were bare, and their one-piece dresses, always embroidered in gay colors at the neck and at the flounce tacked on a few inches from the bottom hem, were cut low enough to disclose skins of a rich brown, velvety texture. The two little girls on board were in all respects miniature replicas of their mothers, and, like all Maya children in the presence of strangers, were silent and still.

Maya men are not so picturesque as their women and fill the eye far less. Their costume, except when at work in the fields, is the same everywhere — light straw sombrero more or less broad, close-fitting white undershirt, wide-hipped, peg-topped white trousers, and bare feet sometimes protected by sandals made either of leather or of discarded automobile tires cut to fit and tied with henequen fiber.

## III

A DIVERSION occurred when the car stopped before a palm-thatched little house to take on a plump young Maya woman in a purple rebozo and a great orange bow in her voluminously knotted black hair. The driver contrived to seat her on the front bench next himself and, with a wink, signalled to a male passenger in the rear, who promptly moved to the other side of the young woman. She was not averse from a flirtation and responded to their remarks with sallies which, judging by the laughter that followed, must have been highly diverting. She carried on either arm a basket, one filled with zapote nuts and the other with red-cheeked mangoes, that yellow-fleshed fruit which to the foreigner tastes not unpleasantly of turpentine. The zapote nut looks somewhat like a baseball with a brown cover. Its flesh is mealy and cool, with a custardy flavor.

On rumbled the little car past immense plantations of the spiked henequen plant, and past rocky and recently burnt-

*Corn Patch in Bush Clearing*

over cornfields, which, despite the absence of either hoe or plow, yield the native, three and four times a year, the corn which has been sacred throughout Mayan history.

The Maya peasant's method of clearing a patch of ground has not varied in a thousand years. Assisted by a neighbor or two, he cuts down the trees with machetes, the long, slender knives which are nearly all imported from Connecticut, leaving a stump three or four feet high. Large trees, which in Yucatan are comparatively rare, due to the shallowness of the soil and to repeated fires, are ringed so as to kill them. Fire is then set to the brush, and as soon as it has done its work, the field is ready for planting. The fire is effective in killing the corn-borers, billbugs, and other noxious insects which would otherwise attack the crop, and also destroys the weeds, but it likewise destroys the humus which the calcareous soil needs for enrichment. Occasionally efforts are made to induce the native farmer to adopt less wasteful methods of clearing land; but this is the way his fathers did it, when land was held in common and was plentiful, and he is slow to change.

Yucatan is within the tropics and so summer never leaves it, but no patriotic Yucateco will admit that the weather is really hot. Occasionally, however, the breezes which play alternately across the peninsula from either the green Gulf of Mexico or the blue Caribbean Sea, are replaced by a flaming breath from the land or by a motionless blanket of suffocating heat. At such times the true Yucateco blames it on the Indians and their accursed ring of forest fires.

## IV

At a crossing the car comes to a halt before a palm-thatched shelter where the mules are changed. On a post is the neatly enameled tin sign: " Chucmichen." Far up the track which crosses ours at right angles is a cluster of tall trees in the midst of which is a hacienda surrounded by windmills. Meantime the rising heat has made us thirsty. We ask the driver if water is handy. No, not here, but " un momentito " — a little moment. He motions toward an Indian coming up the track with a gun in his hand, his head bent beneath some spreading burden. It is a dead wild turkey, and as he comes closer, we see it is a gorgeous specimen of the ocellated turkey of Yucatan, which bears iridescent spots in its tail feathers not unlike those of the peacock. Our driver walks up to the hunter and with a word or two in Maya detaches from his belt his large water-gourd in the shape of the figure 8, with cords of henequen fiber tied around its narrow part. This he hands to us, and we take out its wooden stopper and drink from it a single swallow; for water is scarce in this dry bush, and it is not good manners to drain deep from the gourd of a worker who must carry it all the day and who is dependent on it as he traverses the long hot paths of his country. " *Gracias* — thanks," we say, to which he makes the friendly reply invariable throughout Mexico, " *De nada* — for nothing."

The car trundles on down the road, its tractor mule trotting now between the rails, now on the path at the side, until in the middle of a broad field we find on our track a rival train

going in the opposite direction. It is composed of a chain of tiny flat cars, *plata formas,* loaded with henequen leaves, drawn by a miniature engine contrived out of a Ford motor. Since it is the heavier, we must give way, and we run out on one of the little spurs jutting from the main track at intervals. Our car gives a lurch and careens heavily. We are derailed!

But no one is disconcerted; not even a woman gives a shriek. All the passengers pile out in the most matter-of-fact way, and grasp the sides of our jungle Pullman. A single concerted heave lifts it back to its rails again. The henequen train flutters past with a wave from its driver and a volley of badinage from its crew.

We leave the plantations behind and enter a wall of dense bush. Over the track, swaying at the end of tree limbs, hang the closely woven bulbous nests, as long as a stocking, of the calandria, the Mexican oriole. Tremendous reddish-brown ants' nests, often several feet in circumference, are built in the forks of strangely shaped trees. One of the oddest trees is cone-shaped and almost devoid of foliage, shooting up from a thick fat base to a point at the top and pendulous with pods of a glistening green, shaped somewhat like okra. It is called the parrot tree, from its use as a place of refuge by green parakeets, which, when threatened by hawks, fly to its branches and remain there motionless, looking exactly like the neighboring pods.

We emerge upon a flat marshy land covered with low bushes. Here we smell the cool salty odor of the sea, and in the distance we perceive the long row of waving cocoanut palms which fringes the green and violet waters of the Gulf of Mexico. We dismount in a tiny village inhabited chiefly by Maya fishermen.

Their houses are almost exactly alike in appearance and structure. The walls are built of poles plastered with clay, the roofs of palm leaves overlapping each other like shingles, the floors of stamped earth. Windows are rare. Light and air come through the front door and the back one opposite. Furniture is scanty, because it is not needed. A table, a low chair or two, and small blocks used as seats are the only wooden objects. Sleeping, lounging and sitting, even at table, are done in the ever-present hammock. There is usually at least one hammock in whose deepest recess a baby swings, and several more hang in knots against the walls.

No sooner do we begin to trudge across the soft, sliding sand towards the beach than we become aware of an unearthly smell — a prevailing, penetrating smell that is never to leave our nostrils as long as we are on the Yucatecan coast. In our day we have smelled many odors, but never one like this product of Yucatan's low-lying beaches. To the alien nostril it seems to be a fetid compound of sea water, wet logs, soft shell crabs, fish, kelp, and decaying vegetation. It is perceptible miles from land and by it a man at sea could recognize the approach of Yucatan on a night of the densest darkness. At first it is repellent, then not unpleasant, and finally we become scarcely aware of it.

## V

It is now past midday; the sun flares and crackles on the roofs of the few huts which try to huddle closer into the shade

of the palms; the passengers who were our fellows on the mule-car melt away into the white heat; there is no one visible of whom to ask questions. A small boy passes, eyeing us with a restrained and dignified curiosity.

"Do you know Loretto Marrufo?"

"Yes, señor."

"Does he live close by?"

"Not far."

He halts expectantly. And then we remember we have brought a letter of introduction to a leading citizen of the hamlet. We exhibit the name. The boy nods and signs us to follow. We are conducted to one of the two shops in the village — a tiny place smelling of drying shark's meat — where the boy rouses the proprietor from his siesta.

Out he comes from a darkened room, huge, blinking, barefooted and not too pleased. But after reading our letter, he summons a smile and tells us he is at our service. We ask if there is a place in the village where we can have a meal. Yes, perfectly; he calls a small boy and dispatches him. In a moment the boy returns with word that our lunch has been put on the fire and he himself will call for us when it is ready.

We sit down in the shop and wipe our heads. It is cool under the high-pitched roof of palm leaves, but the door lets in a white breath from the sands outside that smites the cheek like furnace heat. The stock of goods consists chiefly of a few bolts of gaily-colored cloth, buttons, knives, candles, and a pyramid of tinned salmon from the States. Throughout Mexico we found shops stocked with American canned salmon, even on the banks of streams where fresh fish was plentiful; but never once did we see any purchased.

We question the proprietor about the smell of shark's flesh. Yes, he has a little shark's meat drying, but most of it is dogfish, a dish of which the Mayan is very fond. Not many shark are caught on this coast now, he explains. In the old days they were plentiful, but a few years ago, several miles out at sea, something exploded beneath the water. It was a submarine volcano, some said; at any rate there was an explosion, a very grand one, which threw a great wave on the beach so that it came into the houses and put out the women's fires. It frightened the shark away, also it killed all the smaller fish. The sea was afloat with them for days. Since then the fishermen have had to go a long way for good catches, and the shark have never returned.

## VI

Here is our boy. Lunch is ready, and with visible pride he leads the way, enjoying the comments of the other boys as he conducts us across the tiny plaza to the home of Doña Margarita Saldiba Flores, a slender, graceful Maya woman with liquid black eyes. She receives us timidly but with a perfect courtesy. She is relieved that we speak a little Spanish. She apologizes for giving us a poor variety; she would have done better, she explains, had she had longer notice.

Her little house is spotless, and so is her flowing white dress, embroidered in gold and scarlet. We notice that her kitchen is in a separate hut at the rear. This is a sign of consequence; few Yucatecan Indians can afford more than one building.

Also she wears low shoes; evidently a lady of quality. We sit down before *huevos rancheros* — "cowboy eggs"; saffron rice, a salad of sliced radishes and onions, black beans, and hot tortillas as big as plates. She watches the table closely, and as fast as the stack of tortillas melts away, she builds it up again with fresh ones. Oh, for fat, beady pats of Jersey butter to slide between those smoking tortillas! But there is no butter in Mexico, except that imported in tins from California, and soon we learn to do without it and in time miss it no more.

We return to the shop. A grave, dark brown face appears at a window. A weather-beaten straw sombrero is lifted from a cropped, cone-shaped head.

"You wanted to see me, señor?"

"You?"

"I am Loretto."

"Oh! Buenos días, Loretto."

"Buenos, señor."

A sturdy man of fifty, with a seamed face and a quiet, straight-gazing eye. He is a Maya and speaks only a little Spanish. His white trousers are rolled up high on his muscular legs. His mustache is cut close to his firm lips. Except for his color, he might be a respectable, Nordic business man; there is that in his demeanor which inspires confidence. Instantly you know that whatever he says will be true, and that whatever he undertakes will be simply and surely done.

To find such a guide so easily is immense luck, and our spirits rise as we look off across the palms into the deep violet distance and smell the mysterious, suffusing smell of Yucatan's sea-water. On such a remote shore and amid such a smell, we are bound to behold outlandish sights.

*Andres Climbs for Cocoanuts*

" Well, then, Loretto, we want you to take us out to the wild country, where there is jungle and water both."

" 'Sta bien — very good."

" We want to make a camp, to hunt and fish, and to live as you do when you are in the woods."

" 'Sta bien. For how long? "

" A week."

" 'Sta bien, señor. When do you wish to start? "

" Now."

" In this moment? " He is a little startled. " But, señor, there are things to make ready and much to do."

" Well then, tonight."

" Very good."

" What time? "

" When the moon sallies."

" Bueno. You will come for us? "

" Sí, señor."

The interview is closed and with a touch upon his sombrero, shrunken, brown, and sea-stained, he is about to go, but hesitates.

" It would be better, señores, to take another man along, to help handle the cayuco, and to do the cooking. I have an amigo, friend, who is a good man."

" Then bring him along."

He takes leave gravely, but with relief relaxing his serious face. It might be said that we are taking some risk, to go off to the wilds with two Indians of whom we know nothing. Acquaintances have not failed, with lowered voices, to tell us of white men who have gone into the Yucatecan bush never to be seen again; of strangers machetied and then robbed;

of explorers who have been driven out because of unwitting violation of religious taboos; of men found in deserted ranchos lying dead in a splotch of dark blood. But somehow these stories have failed to curdle us; the people have been too quiet, too friendly, too attentive to their own concerns to give us any uneasiness; it is evident that whatever they may be capable of when aroused, they are not a gusty, violent race.

On the other hand, Loretto may have deemed the risk to be all on his side. We had come to him without an introduction, we did not explain our business or our presence in the country, we were foreigners who did not speak his language, and for all he knew we might have been armed and up to deviltry, as Nordic wanderers not infrequently have been in Mexico.

In a moment Loretto returns with his amigo, whom he introduces to us — a short, plump Indian with an easy smile and fluent Spanish. His name is Andres, and he will cook, steer the boat, and look after the camp.

"You have known each other a long time?"

"Yes, señor; *es mi hermano* — he is my brother."

"Ah!" The two men appreciate the joke and in the exchange of laughter another barrier comes down, and we begin to build up a footing for friendship. We do not ask why Loretto failed to say *hermano* instead of *amigo* in the first place, but want to know what we shall have to buy or hire in the way of equipment. They shake heads.

"*Nada* — nothing; we have everything."

"Nets, hooks, guns, ammunition, hammocks?"

"All."

"Tents?"

"We do not use tents. We shall live in a little house. It is on an isleta — a little island."

"All right; but food?"

"We can take some, if you wish."

"How much money for that?"

In palatal Mayan they exchange estimates and agree on a sum.

"Four pesos."

That is $2 in American money. Two dollars to feed four men for a week!

"Are you sure that is enough?"

"It is enough."

We add two more pesos for good measure, and they depart happily. In a moment they return to show us what they have bought — a quantity of shelled corn, much of it the blue variety which all Mexican Indians love; some *pan francés,* baker's bread; *pan dulce,* the sugared bread of Mexico; coffee, and several papaya melons. These last, they explain, are "very good for the stomach," illustrating by patting their navels. Yes, we know; papaya contains pepsin and an extract from it is sold in drugstores as a digestive.

We now ask Loretto if we may go home with him and inspect the equipment we are to take along. He consents, and we follow him up a long avenue of cocoanut palms, bent and careened by the wind, to his little hut close to the water's edge. A hammock swings across its length. In it are seated his wife and baby. She is a short, broad woman with a Chinese complexion and mirthful, alert face. At one end of the room is an altar, above it a lithograph of the Virgin, decorated with tinsel and paper flowers.

Altars and pictures of the Virgin are not uncommon in Mayan homes, even, we were told, in the huts of those natives who still secretly lay offerings in the broken stone temples scattered through the bush.

We had heard of a Maya chief who was asked why his people had so readily accepted the religion brought over by

*Descendant of Old Saurians; an Iguana*

the Spanish conquerors when they already had an ancient one of their own.

" Our gods sometimes failed us," explained the chief, " even though we prayed much and made many sacrifices. So we had no objection to the new set, believing that when our own were deaf, it would do no harm to see what the white men's gods would do."

## VII

Loretto took us with pride to a rear hut where we inspected his nets, buoyed with pieces of balsa, that fairy wood of which a whole timber can be balanced on the end of a finger like a feather; his sails patched with burlap and flour sacking; and his harpoons and tridents for shark, alligator, and heavy fish like the giant ray.

"Will we harpoon a ray if we find one?" we asked Loretto.

He nodded but humped his shoulders. We took this to mean he would attack a ray if it were found, but that he was not yearning for a battle.

"Shark?"

"Yes, but we must go a long way to find them."

"Alligators?"

"Yes, we will find plenty of them."

We then went down to the shore, sprinkled with millions of tiny yellow and pink shells, to inspect the cayuco which was to carry us to the Ten Thousand Islands. Ordinarily the Mexican cayuco is a long, light, slender canoe hollowed out of a log and propelled by poles, sometimes oar-shaped, called *palancas;* but this was a stoutly built, timbered little vessel slotted for two masts and evidently sea-worthy. Her name was neatly painted on the bow — Venus.

Since the ancient Mayan calendar was based on the revolutions of this planet, and even their year was not a sun but a Venus year, we considered the name auspicious and pronounced ourselves satisfied with her.

A sunset came on, very tropical and rose pink. The sky, the shore, the sea, the air itself, was pink. Against a pink world, the bended palms, veterans of a thousand hurricanes, etched themselves in a dense black, very theatrical and almost like a tinted postcard. Women hurried by on catlike feet, bearing jugs and gourds of water homeward. Men trickled toward the cantina for a habanero, the light, stinging rum of Southern Mexico, and somewhere a guitar was being thrummed and people were laughing.

## VIII

And then came a boy to say our *comida* was ready at Doña Saldiba's. By now her timidity was gone; she no longer rolled the whites of her eyes at us, but showed herself ready for a bit of conversation. We proposed a little lesson in the Maya language; she assented eagerly. Where to begin? A Yucatecan cat came in — long-bodied, long-necked and long-eared.

"*Bish-uk-abar* — what's that called?"

"*Mees.*"

"But *mees* is Castellano, Spanish, for cat, isn't it?"

No, she thought not, but called in her husband for verification. He was doubtful and inclined to side with us, whereupon she shot him a look recognizable in all lands, however remote, registering as it does wifely disgust and hopelessness of husbands.

She summoned her son from the rear hut. He worked in

Merida and she intimated that he knew nearly everything. Any motion picture producer seeing that youth, with his cameo features and long, velvet lashes, would have hired him instantly. It was with modesty that he opined *mees* was pure Maya. We doubted this. Without forgetting to place a fresh stack of tortillas before us, Doña Saldiba ran to the door and called in two passersby, and soon we had a houseful of disputants, and two children raised popped eyes from their hammocks, the long-eared cat ran out of the house, and the tortillas grew cold and leathery upon the table.

Peace was obtained when it was agreed that many words were *lo mismo,* the same, in both Spanish and Maya; and from a multitude of counsellors we now learned that if we would speak good Maya we must discriminate carefully between certain words whose pronunciation was so similar as to deceive the beginner. *Ikh,* for example, was Maya for "wind," but *eek* was chile pepper. *Kootz* meant a wild turkey, but *Kootz* pronounced with the K sounded well back upon the palate and the "ootz" brought up later — this way, K'ootz — meant tobacco. The most edifying Maya we learned that evening, however, was introduced by the two children. They called their mother *imama* and their father *intata.*

The sound *ma* appears in infantile mother-words in virtually all the tongues of the universe, and *intata,* especially when childishly abbreviated to "tata," sounds much like the familiar "daddy."

## IX

Towards midnight up rose a yellow moon, distributing glimmering bars over a quiet sea. We dropped into the cayuco from a little wharf. Yucatecos love to stay up late if there is the slightest excuse, and there were enough people gathered to see us off to make the wharf shake under their sandalled feet. There being no wind, the sails were spread in the bottom of the boat to make a sort of bed for us, and bags were neatly arranged into headrests for our comfort.

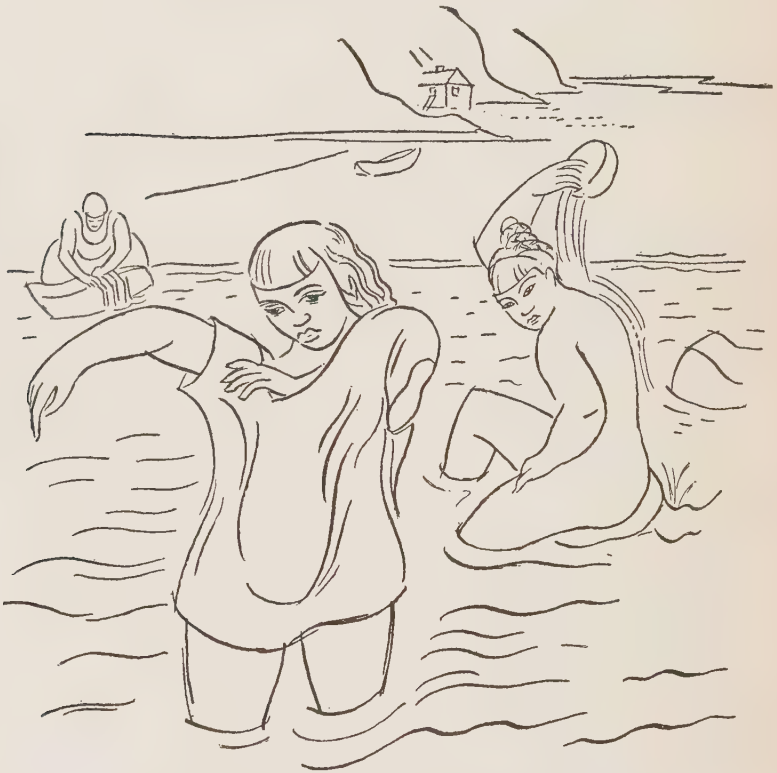
With Loretto standing on the bow deck and Andres at the stern, and spectators calling " adiós," we poled off into a slight mist which became thicker as we went along, and soon we could see nothing of either sea or shore. The motion of the boat was so slow as to be imperceptible, and we might have been voyaging to the moon through the Milky Way.

While our two Mayans kept up a monosyllabic conversation in a low tone, we dabbled our hands over the side of the boat into the lukewarm water. Trails of silver and green phosphorescence spun away from our fingers. Occasionally we struck soft, barely palpable objects which we took to be jellyfish.

With the beam of a flashlight we inspected our cargo. There were two anchors, shapeless pieces of iron tied around with thick henequen rope; two casks of drinking water; two harpoons, one heavy and the other light; a single-barrelled shotgun, a few brass shells, and a hand-loading and capping outfit; a hand-net heavily weighted with lead at the bottom; a buoyed net; two wooden mallets, spare poles, and miscellaneous boxes

and bags, besides the stowed sails and masts. There was enough cargo to equip a far-sailing expedition, and with it the Venus was fairly low in the water. We then began to bedevil our two guides with questions:

" Is it far, where we are going? "



*Indian Women Bathe in Nature's Costume*

" *Muy lejos* — rather far."

" When will we get there? "

" *Mañana mañana* — tomorrow morning."

" Will you raise a sail soon? "

" There's no wind."

"Will you have to pole the boat all night?"

"Yes."

"Won't you get tired?"

The answer was terse and scornful in Maya: "*Ma,* no."

Loretto and Andres poled the Venus along with slow, rhythmic thrusts that indicated thorough ease and tirelessness. The motion was fascinating to watch, and at last we must needs take a hand.

"May we?" pointing to the spare poles.

"If you wish."

We stood up on the seats in the middle of the boat and sank the poles over the side. They were lighter than they appeared to be, and we tried to think of a boatman's song, something raffish and merry with which to encourage our crew as the waves lapped gently at the name Venus on the bow.

The first few strokes were successful, and we had begun to think of offering to spell the crew, when the poles suddenly refused to come back out of the water, and only swift grabs by Andres saved them while we were tumbling into the bottom of the boat. Loretto showed his amusement by wrinkling up his nose, which was his manner of laughing; but Andres treated himself to a hearty guffaw and continued to giggle as, in recovering our poles, we knocked our heads with them.

We found we were passing over a viscous, muddy bottom which gripped a pole as with teeth, requiring a practised jerk and twist to loosen the pole before it could be lifted. But at best we failed to time our swings in unison with the Indians, or in harmony with the sway of the boat, and finally we gave it up and subsided into our bed in the cayuco's bottom, while

Loretto and Andres grinned and went on quietly poling into the mist, talking in a low-pitched Maya that was like the voice of the darkness itself.

"Loretto, you say we are to camp on an island?"

"Yes, señor."

"What is its name?"

"Pundersak."

"What kind of game is there?"

"All classes."

"*Tigre,* jaguar?"

"Yes."

"We are to hunt jaguar?"

"Yes, señor."

We relapsed into our bed of sails and were content. We were pushing through a tropic sea into a darkness, toward some point far from the orbit of white men; we were going to camp on an island; and to hunt the jaguar, the red tiger of the ancient Mayans. It was hard to wait for morning.

## V

## *ON A ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLE*

TWO hours later we were awakened by a rattling sound, and knew the boat had stopped. Loretto was gathering his hand-net for a cast. The different smell of the water and shore and the dim shadows of trees in the distance indicated we had entered a river. Loretto twisted his body and flung out the net with a circular motion. The net ballooned like a skirt and plunged its gaping mouth heavily into the water. The splash stirred a sleeping earth into commotion. Giant fish tore the water into ribbons, leaving behind great gashes of phosphorescence that lingered in the deeps like night-photographs of lightning. Smaller fish, aroused from their beds, shot up through the surface of the water, falling back like lead dropped from a tower. Some huge body on shore, perhaps an alligator, stirred and smote the river with a gigantic plop.

Had Loretto caught anything? Had he, indeed! He strained to lift his flapping catch over the side. Perhaps a couple of bushels of the fantastic fish of the tropics lay under our flashlight — angel fish, butterfly fish, fish plain and fish in iridescent colors, short fish and long ones, fish with beaks and prongs, and a shoal of catfish, *bobo,* that barked like doomed and

mournful dogs. Most of them were discarded — "*No sirve,* no good," explained Andres. The rest we would eat tomorrow.

We went a bit further and cast again. The river was stuffed, tumultuous, with fish. The water gleamed and glowed with them. In the ripples they created every variety of fireworks — lines and curves and wheels of splashing corruscations. They darted up to the boat as if to sniff at our light, grew suspicious, and turned on their tails, spattering our faces with silvery drops. They described jagged lines and arcs of fire that appeared to be a hundred yards long, and whole schools burst into flight with a noise like an explosion.

## II

Daylight now could not be very distant, and we resolved to stay awake to see it crack the east, but our sail-beds were soft and we had had a full day. We drifted into another nap, and Loretto and Andres, silent now, went on poling the gravid Venus.

We next became conscious that we were passing a row of inhabited islands. We could see the people moving and hear their chatter. Most of them were wearing the white clothes of Yucatan. In the distorting mist, a little penetrated now by the first rays of daybreak, they seemed to be many feet high. They were moving about and very busily engaged at something, perhaps fishing. We asked Loretto who they were, but could

not understand his reply. We asked him to push closer to shore that we might see the strangers better. The boat turned and ploughed among them.

The earth uprose in masses and took to itself wings. The air rushed and beat upon our faces. The sky split into particles which eddied round and round. There was a roar as from some gigantic waterfall and the heavens echoed with a limitless clamor. We now understood what Loretto said, for he sententiously uttered the single Spanish word, "*Pájaros* — birds."

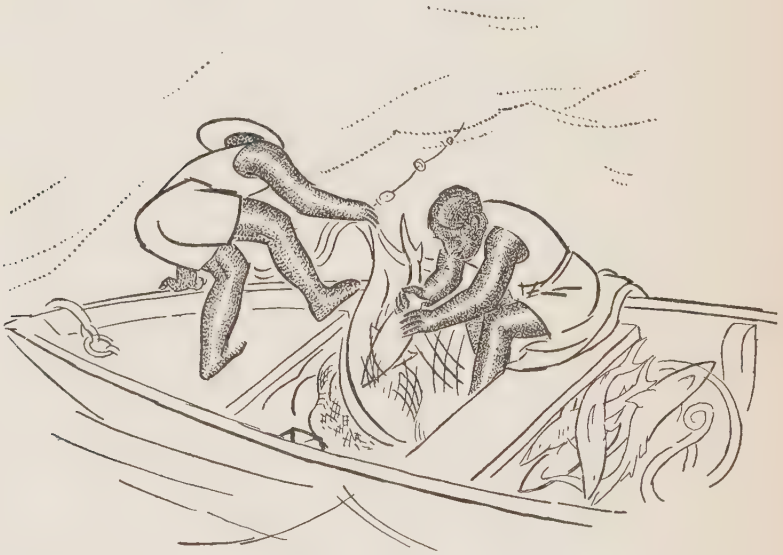
Birds, indeed! The universe had suddenly resolved itself into birds. The quantity of them, the noise of them, the volume of them awed one into a state of unbelief. It was a dream verging upon nightmare. It was incredible that one spot could hold so many birds; we must have been off our course and tilted into a planet especially created for birds.

In a moment, for the tropical sun suddenly soars into the sky like a kite, we could distinguish the different varieties. There were pelicans, cormorants, cranes, herons, egrets, gulls, boobies, ibis, terns, and hosts of others whose forms and manner of flight were unknown to us. What we had supposed to be inhabited islands were short and narrow reefs barely above water — one of the roosting grounds of Yucatan's billions of aquatic birds. Feeling a little like serpents which had awkwardly entered a nocturnal Garden of Eden, we went on, but the miles continued to yield birds until our heads ached and we drew a corner of sail across our faces to cut off sights with which our senses could no longer contend.

## III

Señores!"

It was Loretto's voice, patient but with an edge of sternness, and on waking we knew we had arrived. Our Arabian Night was over, and it was day. The cayuco was tied to the walking roots of a mangrove tree. Here was our island, and here our rancho with its roomy hut thatched all the way down to the ground with palm leaves.



*Hauling in the Nets*

The early morning air was, for the tropics, surprisingly crisp, and Loretto drew on his overcoat. It was a short jacket made of burlap, of the kind used for corn sacks, and the middle of his back bore in large letters the name of an American seed house. The edges of the pockets were bound with tape, for hard

wear, and the seams were stoutly sewed with henequen fiber. It was well-tailored and fitted him smoothly across his tremendous shoulders.

We were on a narrow island, half a mile long and about 200 yards wide at its broadest point. All around us were other islands, densely wooded and separated from us by broad streams running in from the sea, called ríos.

From the island closest to us came a hoarse grunting as of ten thousand pigs. This sound came from innumerable cormorants; the tops of trees were studded with them as far as the eye could see. Occasionally a limb broke under their dense black weight, this event being greeted with an outburst of grunts resembling hoarse laughter. In a moment, as by signal, they all flew down to the water, forming themselves in a long line across the river. They were silent, except for their captain, who gave orders in a series of terse grunts, while they dived and rose in perfect unison.

We landed our goods on a beach of clean white sand. We picked up a handful and saw that it was not sand at all, but the bodies of minute crustaceans. Their dead shells were incredibly small but in nearly all cases whole and perfect.

Later we were to learn that all these countless islands contained little or no siliceous matter, but were simply the heaped-up bodies of billions upon billions of tiny shellfish. In number they were equalled only by the limitless stars. We guessed that the islands were formed by the action of wind and water on these minute bodies, gradually building up from the bottom of the sea. In the course of years a reef would be formed. Drifting wood, decaying upon it, would in time form a humus. Then seeds and roots, brought by wind and birds, would find

lodgment there. Vegetation would arise, expanding into a matted jungle, penetrable only by a machete and a strong arm.

On the shore of our island lay the bleached head of an enormous alligator, grinning sardonically. Nearby lay the skeleton of a smaller one, shreds of flesh still visible on its bones. It had probably been the entree of a cluster of zopilotes, who were sitting meditatively on a neighboring tree.

In the bushes at the water's edge lay the bones of a deer and the faded but still gorgeous feathers of a flamingo. Its graceful wings, spread upon the sand, curved upward as if in appeal. The shoulders were a deep but delicate rose pink, making the eye gloat upon the color with an exquisite pleasure. In the middle of the underside of the wing the pink yielded to a steel grey, which at the outer edge deepened to a glinting black. Who would want to destroy a flamingo? Surely this was the first bird created for the Age of Delight and Innocence in the Garden of Eden, to wade in its mirrored pools and to show against their green banks its curving flame.

"Loretto, are there flamingo around here?"

"Yes, many."

"Will we see any?"

He swept the sky with a glance.

"*Mira,* look!"

From the direction of the sea, a thin line of red was rising through the trees. The early sunlight ran along its edge from end to end. Behind it was another line, and behind that another. It was the Aurora Borealis by daylight.

"Flamingo!" announced Loretto, and bent over his work again. He was slashing fish.

In a moment the birds were overhead, flying in a line which was constantly changing its components but which never lost its orderly formation. They numbered several hundred. So low they flew and so clearly did the sun reveal them, that we could see their different tints and shades, varying from a pale pink that verged on pure whiteness to rose-pink, vermilion, deep rose, scarlet, and a shade which was almost crimson, every wing banded with steel grey and black. We could ask nothing more magnificent as our welcome to the Island of Pundersak.

Loretto remarked that this was nothing; further down the coast were their nesting grounds where we could see thousands of them sitting on their raised nests, which according to an untrue tradition are built up to the same height as their long legs, so as to obviate the necessity of squatting.

" Will you take us there? " we asked Loretto.

He said yes, but we did not go. We had other adventures with flamingo, however, to be hereafter described.

## IV

By this time our cargo was unloaded and our two Mayans set about breakfast, for which we had appetites crispened by the salt breeze that came in from the sea about a mile distant. Loretto had scaled the fish and slashed them obliquely down the sides three or four times. He did not remove the entrails. Through their mouths he then thrust short peeled sticks, spitting the fish from end to end.

He set these, in the Oriental manner of cooking meat, to turn on forked sticks thrust in the ground on either side of a fire built in the mouth of the hut, until they were well barbecued. He then motioned to us to follow him down to the beach. Here we found in the clear shallow water an abundance of the shellfish called caracol, or sea-snails, as big as a man's fist. "Good to eat," was his comment. He picked up an armful and carried them back to the fire to roast in the embers.

Meantime Andres was preparing the breakfast bread. In a covered pot placed in the bottom of the boat he had brought the day's rations of shelled corn, which had been softening all night in lime water. Some of it had the blue grains beloved by all Mexican hearts; for what reason I was never able to discover, although it is easy to see, by a glance at any structure on which paint is used, that Mexicans love blue for its own sake. It is a fact, also, that the Mayan priests, as revealed in their painted sculptures and Codex pictographs, on sacrificial days painted themselves blue, and likewise decorated their human victims with blue stripes before opening their breasts and tearing out their hearts.

It was next in order for Andres to bring out the *metate,* the ancient stone mortar, and the grinder, *brazo,* with which Mexico has ground its corn for many a hoary century. But what he did produce, and this with a flourish, was an American coffee grinder. Through this he ran his swollen grain.

It was obvious that Andres expected applause for his modernity; his demeanor plainly said: "You see, we are not so slow down here in Yucatan." We were compelled to express surprise and wonder, but we would have preferred to kick his shining

machine into the río. We were being cheated of a ceremony on which we had set some store — participation in the eating of *pim* — Maya for tortilla — in this our first genuine Mayan meal, as prepared from *ixim,* corn (or maize), according to the ancient manner; and here was a pestiferous Yankee invention robbing us of the opportunity.

It had been our intention to ask Loretto — who was obviously a devout Maya although a Roman Catholic too — to pronounce, before we ate it, a Mayan blessing on the corn, that indigenous American plant, originally a simple grass, which has put back-bone, muscle, and energy into Americans of the two New World continents for generation unto generation. Here was a platform on which the two Americas, regardless of race and color, could agree — the love of corn, whether emerging from the fire as pone, muffin, pim or tortilla. But now we had not the heart; though after all we had to concede that Andres was right, and in line with " progress," whatever that is, to use the patent-grinder; for with it he could do in a few minutes that which with the metate would take him two or three hours. However, there is no saying how valuable a bush Mayan's time is.

We were rewarded by seeing him take up balls of the maize dough between his palms and pat, pat, pat, them into the thin cakes which laid on a flat plate of clay or metal quickly became the tortillas. Red, white and green are Mexico's national colors, but " pat, pat, pat " is the national Mexican sound. Tell a Mexican in a foreign land of the many times you have seen and heard brown fingers go " pat, pat, pat," often before dawn, over the day's tortillas and he will beg you to desist before he dissolves and comes apart with longing and homesickness.

## V

In the door of the hut we sat on the ends of logs and breakfasted nobly on roast fish, roast shellfish, and tortillas hot from Andres' clay plate, while scarlet flamingos charged the clouds overhead and battalions of grey pelicans a few yards away smote the river with their heavy breasts. Before the meal began Loretto fetched shallow gourds of río water in which we washed our hands, and at its end he handed us a globular gourd of fresh water with which to rinse our mouths. Throughout tropical Mexico mouth-rinsing is universal after a meal. Afterwards the water is not infrequently spat out on the earthen floor of the house.

We ate in silence, too intent on filling ourselves even to ask Loretto the question with which we peppered him at the appearance of each new object: "*Bish-uk-abar?* What do you call that?" Besides, after the night's repeated wakings, we were sleepy, and so, after a solid night of poling, were the Indians. To be hungry and then to eat abundantly, to be drowsy and then to sleep at will, and to do both on a tropical isle where fantastic adventures awaited us — we were not insensible to the rareness of our situation, but just now we were too fagged to think, which is a state containing its own peculiar bliss.

To make myself a couch where I could hear the water lapping against the bank and to catch whatever breeze was blowing, I dropped a blanket on the spreading network of roots which fastened a densely-leafed tree to the shore, and

fell upon it. I was already gazing at the spinning feet of the film which is called a dream when I felt myself pierced by a million red-hot needles. Memories of explorers' tales told me instantly what my plight was. I was attacked by army ants. One glance showed me the angry little red devils swarming up from the nest on which I had tranquilly stretched myself. Simultaneously I shucked my clothing, of which there was little, and plunged into the water, where I stood up and scraped off the hanging varmints with handfuls of sand from the beach; while Andres, who was the only witness of the incident, threw his head back and laughed all the way up to his throat from his plump belly. He advised me never to sit or lie anywhere without seeing first if there were *hormigas* present, a piece of advice I did not need from that moment on.

When I resumed my nap it was in the bottom of the cayuco, and when I waked at noon, it was with a sensation of chill. A strong, northeast wind was blowing, making the shade in which I slept seem icy, though one step out into the sun proved that its heat was not a whit less than tropical. Loretto said a *norte,* norther, was blowing, and that this wind, as cool as if from the top of some iceberg, always made the shade, even on the hottest days, seem chilly.

Loretto, having also had his siesta, was now preparing the inside of the hut for use. It seems there had been a misunderstanding about hammocks, and instead of there being enough for our party of four, there was only one, his own.

However, he assured us we should not have to sleep on the ground and pointed to two curious cots. They were made of long, flexible rods laid side by side on cross-pieces, which rested on forked sticks driven into the ground till their tops were a

foot above the surface. A test showed that these rods were tough and resilient; and when a sail, net or mat was thrown across them they made satisfactory bed-springs, curving according to the body's shape, and we spent our nights on them in entire comfort.

These cots were at the farther end of the hut. Parallel with them hung Loretto's hammock, woven of henequen fiber and practically everlasting. At right angles, on the left side of the hut, was a low bench constructed like our cots, except that the rods were stiff. Boards are comparatively rare in Yucatan, due to the scarcity of large timber; hence the people make rods and poles do the work of planks.

Opposite were a fish box and the water casks. In the corner on the same side was a table, built of rods, with the legs sunk into the ground, and on this rested whatever had to be kept away from insects and prowling animals. The door of the hut was in the left corner, and just inside was the fireplace, consisting of three stones laid in a triangle. Between them rested two logs. Their points were always kept touching so as to keep the fire smoldering. This fire was never allowed to go out, and Andres even woke up during the night to shove the logs together.

It did go out once, however, when we were absent for an unusually long time, and there was quite a search for matches until I produced a little book of them, of the red-tipped paper kind given free with purchases in North American cigar stores. When I tore out one of these, struck it, and lighted the cocoanut fiber used as tinder, Andres and Loretto stared with wonder. "Matches in a book!" They asked to examine the little book and turned it over and over in their hands as if it

were a jewel, a match being a precious object in any jungle. When I suggested they strike one to see how it worked, they at once handed the book back with an emphatic refusal. Keep it for a special occasion, they said. They were curious about the printing on the cover and when I gave them a rough translation of the advertisement of a corn cure, they were much edified.

" You strike the matches out of the book and then sit down and read it," said Andres. This struck them as highly amusing and we all had a laugh over it.

## VI

After a lunch of fish, hashed caracol made very hot with chile peppers, and tortillas, we explored the island. Our end was the most elevated; then came a waste of black marsh, fetid smelling and matted with the interlaced roots of mangroves; and next a series of shallow lagoons in which the curved-bill ibis stalked meditatively, and egrets, bearing the much-sought feathers, stood reflectively on the branches of dead stumps.

The shores of the lagoons, brown with a half-dry mud, were studded with innumerable tiny footprints, some of them made by birds and the rest by small animals of species unknown to us. The other end of the island was a hot, dry waste of sand or, rather, shells, sprinkled with grey bushes from which sprang, on soundless wings, a dozen or more white-spotted

nighthawks, one after another, soaring a few feet in a crooked, jerky flight and then dropping again into the bushes. Narrow paths ran here and there, and in one of them we found fresh deer tracks. From this end of the island, as from our own, several other islands were visible.

Everywhere in the ríos between them were aquatic birds, all going about their business with intentness and disregarding us entirely. Most conspicuous were the pelicans, of which there seemed to be hundreds in sight at any given moment, flying, fishing or dozing with their pouched beaks resting on their breasts in an attitude of an irritating complacency and self-satisfaction.

A pelican carries out his chief occupation with all the grace of an overloaded motor truck. He flies low over the water at tremendous speed until he sights his fish. Instantly he lifts his wings, checks his speed, describes a complete loop, and strikes the water with a force that opens a great hole and throws spray high into the sunlight. He emerges, if lucky, with the tail of a fish wiggling between his jaws which he shakes down into his pouch before he can increase his speed again. If he has young, he flies to the nest and merely opens his jaws, exposing a trunkful of fish, from which the infants make their greedy selections, forcing father's head back and seeming to peer into his interior to make sure he is not hiding anything from them.

By the time we had returned to the hut, where Loretto was going over his harpoons, the heat was so steamy as to provoke thoughts of a deep plunge into the clear, green water nearest. But Loretto remarked that he had been cleaning fish there, and advised us to cross the río in the cayuco to the op-

posite island where there was a shaded cove bordered with grass. We did so, peeled off, and jumped in from the boat. The water was warm near the surface, but by diving repeatedly we stirred up enough of the colder currents at the bottom to make a swim refreshing. It was grand sport, but we were a little taken aback by an unexpected circumstance. Our own bodies had suddenly become repulsive.

Already we were so accustomed to the sight of brown bodies that the Mayan skin, with its smooth texture and gliding muscles beneath, seemed the norm, while our own skins appeared bleached and unhealthy. Even the contrasting redness of our necks and arms, on which we had been deeply sunburned, seemed objectionable. There was a sudden recollection of a remark once overheard from an African explorer, that after a long residence alone in the interior, he came upon a group of white men at a trading post; he expected to be pleased with the opportunity to converse with his own kind, but instead he felt annoyed at their pinky-whiteness. Later an African chief informed him in confidence, that when he first saw the explorer he felt a sense of profound pity for him, believing him to be suffering from a woeful disease.

Is this sudden and unlooked-for sense of repulsion for one's own chalky skin due to the contrast with those brown bodies which belong so truly to the earth; or is it due to an unconscious harking back to some primitive period before the Caucasian adopted the North and its bleaching clothes?

Certain it is that under the glaring sun of the hotter Mexicos and their flaming vegetation, the smooth body of the Indian, sometimes in the light bearing a golden glint, alone appears to be natural and fitting; it alone indubitably *belongs*. The

white epidermis is a poor and feeble cover in the fiercer climates. Every slight bruise, welt, and scratch shows upon it with a prominence which is its own confession of weakness; while if exposed directly to a vigorous sun it simply cooks, sending its bearers either to consoling ointments or to bed.

At another time we went swimming with some Indian lads. Wearing only two very simple and extremely detachable garments, the boys reached the water first, where they disported themselves with loud shouts. But on our entry they fell silent. They were looking at our white bodies, probably the first they had ever seen so close, with astonishment and concern.

## VII

Our swim in this particular case was cut short owing to the appearance of one of the aboriginal inhabitants, also out for a swim. We were well out from shore when we saw, a few yards away, a pair of close-set eyes being ferried across the stream in front of some body which, judging by the ripple it left, was of considerable length. We had never before seen anything of the kind from such an angle, but we needed no guidebook to tell us what it was. It was an alligator, and evidently not a baby one.

We had read somewhere, or had been told, that an alligator will not attack a man except in self-defence and that he would rather run than bite, but we had made no test of this statement, nor did we feel like making one just now. At any rate, to make

*Red Lines of Flamingoes Overhead*

certain that it was an alligator we swam back to the boat, to use it as a platform. It was an alligator without doubt; we could see not only the eyes, projecting like periscopes, but the snout, and dimly descry the gently smiling, ironical jaws. And while we were on the subject, we made out two more alligators not far off. The stream recommended to us for a swim was an alligator alameda.

On returning to camp, we reproached Loretto for withholding this material information. He was unconcerned.

" Yes, there are lagartos over there, but there are bigger ones here where you wanted to bathe."

On this we could think of no further comment, but compromised by asking him the Mayan name for alligator.

" *Ayin.*"

We noticed, however, that in conversation he preferred the Spanish word *lagarto.*

" Tonight," he went on, " we go hunting. What shall we pursue? "

" That big *ayin* that lives over yonder in the swimming hole."

" Very good," and then Andres called us to dinner. For this meal we had fish again, tortillas, papaya melon, and coffee.

The coffee of Yucatan and other parts of tropical Mexico has a high and pungent flavor all its own because it is nearly always burnt. The berry is bought green and roasted in shallow pans, and the fire being made hot for tortilla-making, the coffee emerges well blackened. But so often did a hot cup of burnt coffee, sweetened with raw cane sugar, come to our rescue when we were fagged or wet, that we finally began to

look on it as a nectar ranking next to that perhaps served to the Mayan gods, and when again we reached the uniformity of Nordic civilization and partook of the coffee of commerce, it seemed flat and devoid of character.

When, after we had rinsed our mouths, Loretto arose and announced that we would now go out and harpoon alligators before the moon sallied from its bed somewhere in the Caribbean Sea, it can be imagined with what large anticipations we pushed the cayuco off into the darkness. Man wishes not only to live, but to live intensely. Two of the ingredients that promote intensity are mystery and unknownness. These we had in abundance. The night was soft and velvet black, and a moment after pushing off we had lost our sense of direction entirely. Again the milky water glimmered with phosphorescence, again disturbed fish uncoiled their trails of fire, and violent splashes were heard as our boat nosed through beds of weed, stirring up smells that proclaimed the tropics loudly.

We wondered how, in the sooty darkness, Loretto was going to see his game. He soon enlightened us. Leaving Andres to pole the boat, he proudly drew on his head a battered old felt hat bearing a carbide light and a reflecting mirror imported from the States. He explained that he was the only man in the village that owned such a light. With its powerful beam we searched the waters of the swimming hole where we had seen the 'gators, but neither those specimens nor any others were now visible.

Silently we poled up a shallow estuary, full of yellow water and bordered by dense bushes, under which, Andres said, lagartos loved to lie, waiting for whatever morsels might float down the middle of the stream.

Blackly printed against the white beam of his head-lamp, Loretto's crouching figure at the bow, with his harpoon poised aloft, made a spectacle which we in the rear watched with appreciation. As the light swept back and forth, distorting the shadows, he was now a squat gorilla, now a giant Cyclops, now the cave man a-hunting. He kept up a ceaseless patter, low and sibilant, to Andres in the stern, and though we understood not a word of it, we could easily follow his directions as Andres swung the boat to and fro, easing quietly into the bushes or poling rapidly upstream. 'Gators seemed scarce tonight, and we detected a murmur of disappointment in Loretto's voice.

We had gone perhaps a mile when Loretto crouched, tapped the carbide container in his pocket to increase the gas flow and sharpen the light, and then began to give orders to Andres with a certainty that told us he had seen a 'gator. Now for action.

We stood up on the seats and studied the circle of light which Loretto kept fixed on the water, but could see nothing. Loretto's voice shaded to a whisper. The boat crept forward by inches. The harpoon was raised. Again we looked. This time we could see the 'gator, but instead of seeing his full length lying outlined in the water, we could make out only the back of his eye mounds and the shadow of a languid foot.

These indicated he was even larger than the 'gator of the swimming hole; he could not be less than the size of all the *ayin* in the creek. He was paddling slowly upstream and suspecting nothing, though one would think the unusual light would warn him.

We were almost upon his tail when Loretto drew back his arm and let drive. The harpoon point seemed to strike the animal just back of the right forepaw. There followed a mighty flurry and furious thrashing, and Loretto braced his feet as he strained back on the raw-hide rope. "Got him!" Andres came tumbling over to his brother's help, but the next instant the water resumed its even flow and the rope fell limp. The 'gator was off and gone.

We learned that harpooning an alligator is not a simple matter of finding one and then striking him. Usually he lies in the water almost totally submerged except for his nostrils and eyes. One must guess at the position of his body. His back, from head to tail, is armored with a series of bony plates which, if the animal is mature, are almost impenetrable. The hunter therefore must make an oblique thrust, so as to puncture the 'gator if possible in the side, at the junction of the back-plates and the softer belly skin. At the same time the harpoonist is compelled, if he would put speed and weight into his blow, to thrust almost directly downward. These necessities make a nice problem which only controlled muscles and a fine eye can solve.

In a second we spied another 'gator, but he saw us and submerged. It was the same with a third and fourth. A fifth one Loretto struck at but missed. Andres thought it was not going to be a good night for captures, but there was something about the calmness with which Loretto accepted his disappointments that made us confident we would not go home without a prize.

We now poled into a quiet reach where nothing was visible. When Loretto next raised his harpoon it was without an in-

stant's warning, and he struck with a suddenness that all but pitched Andres off the stern. This time the fury of the struggle that ensued in the water showed his shot had been true. A lashing tail smote the boat with heavy thuds, but a noose slipped by Andres over the 'gator's nine-inch grin, and a joint heave over the side of the boat, brought the victim on board, where his thick and wicked tail was subdued with a few loops of rope. It was a young alligator not over four and a half feet long, but he would prevent us from going home empty-handed.

An alligator's tail is a warm storage house for a solid cylinder of fat, as we discovered when we skinned the animal. The length and weight of this important piece of baggage explains why a 'gator can easily dispense with food during his long spells of sleepiness or quiescence. He gets really hungry only at intervals, and during periods of prolonged meditation he has only to call on his tail to send up an increment of nourishment, which indicates how much more thoughtfully Nature has fashioned alligators than philosophers.

We turned home under a great tropical moon cutting her way through roily black and distended clouds, scalloped with a luminous grey. As with everything else, Nature is far more prodigal with moonlight in the tropics than in nordic climes. It falls not in surface beams but in penetrating floods, illumining the remote as well as the near, and lavishly accentuating the unearthly and the fantastic. Under it the gay becomes still gayer and the sombre becomes funereal. This night the moonlight seemed to melt and to substitute itself for the water, so that we rode homeward on a river of running quicksilver.

We were abed a very few seconds after landing, we on our

rod-cots, Loretto swinging in his hammock, and Andres curled up on a pile of nets near the door. Outside the night was soundless, but I failed to sleep because of a maladjustment in the sails on which I lay. And then I was startled, in the darkness, to feel a hand laid on me. It was Loretto's. He tucked me in and went quietly back to his swaying hammock.

## VI

## *THE RED FLAMINGO*

ON our second morning upon the island of Pundersak there were two sensations. The first was the discovery of a scorpion (and we tramping around the night before in our bare feet), running under our cots with his curious rippling gait, half like a centipede and half like an antelope. This little black brute is one of the ugliest concentrations of deviltry in the tropics and is greatly feared by white men, although the natives pay little attention to him. He has horns like a Texas steer's, except that they are incurved, and a hooked sting in his jointed tail which he wields with lightning effect. We raised an outcry over this specimen, about four inches long, but Loretto, to show his scorn for such trifles, stooped down to pick it up and fling it out. The scorpion curved his tail over his back and stung Loretto in the thumb, whereupon we stamped out its life. Loretto pretended not to mind, but admitted he felt some pain in the groins and in the armpits, upon which we guessed that scorpion poison immediately affects the glands there. We got out our first-aid case, extracted the broken point of the sting with tweezers, and treated the wound with an antiseptic ointment. This remedy Loretto pronounced wonderful; he said it cured him instantly. It was only when we re-

packed the case that we noticed we had treated Loretto, in our haste, not with the antiseptic ointment but with an emollient for sunburn.

After breakfast we sighted a sail bearing up the river and made out an Indian standing at the bow casting his weighted net. He was having rich hauls; the sunlight tipped the fins of his fat fish as his net hauled them over the side. In a moment he and his companion sighted us, dropped their sail, and poled over to visit. They were two young Indians, one with shaggy hair and the other with the back-sloped forehead, curved nose, and fleshy lips seen so often in the ancient Maya sculptures. They sat down in front of our hut and watched our movements with snapping black eyes.

Then occurred the second sensation. It was caused by my preparations to shave. Before I left Nordic civilization, a friend had presented me with one of its most conspicuous achievements — a time-saving shaving outfit — and I was about to use it for the first time. When, carrying the outfit in its pig-skin, gold-stamped case, I asked Andres, without explanation, for a *lookh,* gourd of hot water, it was plain to him and the other men that something mysterious was afoot and they abandoned all activities, even gossip in their own tongue, to see what I was up to. Doubtless they believed I was about to begin some grave North American ceremonial, some esoteric rite, some libation and sacrifice to an exacting god. I was. I was going to shave with an improved safety razor.

I never before realized with such acuteness how ridiculous an ordinary bit of daily routine like engaging in the standard American shave can be made to appear, and what a burden of care and tedious detail accompanies one of our

most celebrated inventions. It took the tropical bush to bring awareness.

But it was too late to withdraw now. I must go through with the task to the bitterest end, while the four Indians ranged themselves in a gallery behind me and watched silently for the next step.

I carried the calabash of water out to a rod-table, which served as a workbench, in front of the hut under a tree, and swept it clean of fish-scales, alligator toes, and tortilla crumbs. In the crotch of an overhanging limb I affixed a small mirror. From the case I took out a celluloid cylinder, and from that a shaving brush. From another cylinder I removed a soap-stick and detached its tinsel wrapping and a booklet in gay colors, which I threw away.

Afterwards, I saw one of the Indian visitors furtively retrieve this wrapper and the booklet, which extolled a line of toilet soaps, powders, creams, unguents and emollients under the portraits of gentlemen and ladies all showing surprise, delight, and heightened anticipation. He pocketed them carefully.

From the case I next removed a packet, detached its wrapper, and selected a blade contained in a small envelope. I removed this envelope, also the wrapper of transparent glassine paper. To wipe off the rust which might have gathered on the blade in this hot climate, I oiled it from a small bottle supplied for the purpose. The blade being now in perfect condition, I accidently dropped it into the feathers, fur, and fish-scales covering the ground, and had to clean it all over again, while murmurs of sympathy came from the audience. I next took out the razor handle and guard, slipped in the blade, and fixed it at the

correct angle. I was now ready for the more serious phase of the operation.

Wetting the soap, I coated my face with the end of the stick and with the brush rubbed the soap into a lather. I allowed it to soak for the orthodox three minutes, and then began to shave. This proceeded without incident except that, water being scarce, I was compelled to clean the guard with leaves pulled from the tree. Andres, however, with his alert mind seeing my need, fetched me a corner of clean white cloth.

As I gazed at my half white, half red countenance in the mirror, a small iguana, not over six inches long, softly eased himself down the tree trunk and took up a position immediately behind and in line with the glass, hanging head down by his hind toes. His beaded eyes held the same expression visible in the faces of the native spectators — sympathy mingled with respectful curiosity. They all saw the iguana's interest and shook with contained laughter, Andres digging his heels into the ground and shaking his head as if this were the richest thing in his recent experience.

The shave finished, I dried my face, applied a little talcum powder, removed the razor blade from the guard, cleaned it, dried the holder, replaced the blade between its jaws, washed the brush, returned it to its container, restored the soap to its holder, and put all the accessories back in their proper places in the case. The whole operation seemed to have taken hours, and when my audience dispersed, it was like the breaking up of a baseball game, the conclusion of an opera, or the end of an old-fashioned protracted meeting.

## II

After skinning the captured alligator and salting his hide, Loretto announced that we would now take the cayuco and go on a little exploring expedition to acquaint us with the lay of the land, and incidentally to fetch some palm leaves and find fresh water. The palm leaves were needed for repairs to our roof, which had suffered in recent northers, and more water was needed for culinary and washing operations than we had brought along.

This project suited us eminently, it being a peculiarity of camping on an island that no sooner is one installed than one wishes to leave it and explore elsewhere. We loaded the boat with two water casks, nets, and the shotgun, and pushed off down-stream through lanes of aquatic birds which, though they moved out of our way, otherwise paid us no attention.

It was one of those days for which the only adjective is perfect, and which occur in early summer in the tropics with a completeness foreign to northern zones. This particular morning had been cooled by the expiring breezes of the norther to a temperature that moved one instinctively to activity.

We rounded a bend. "Flamingo!" said Loretto, pointing. At first we could see nothing and then on a white beach about a mile away we could make out a narrow ribbon of red. Its parts were moving; the sun made it glow like an elongated neon light. Thus does the flamingo, in a land where every

other living thing adopts some kind of protective coloration, advertise himself to a gun-carrying world. Even his very name is derived from the Latin word for flame. On clear days the sparkling line of him and his fellows, feeding in the shallows against a background of blue water or green shade, can be seen for miles; and it is strange, considering his slaughter through the centuries and the fact that his scarlet feathers were eagerly sought for the plumed cloaks fashionable among the ancient caciques, that the flamingo has survived in Mexico at all.

Luckily it is foreign to the nature of the Yucatan Indian to be a pot-hunter, and it is with difficulty that he can be induced to take up commercial killing. If with trap or gun he can earn a few extra *pesos* for a game animal or bird, he is quite content with the windfall, and is not inclined to go hunting again until the money is spent.

Loretto took up the gun and turned the boat toward the feeding birds, poling slowly. Soon we could see them dipping their long, curved necks in the water and lifting one foot after another high and clear out of the ripples with a motion of infinite stateliness, keeping up a clacking, crooning chatter. They were enjoying the morning no less than ourselves, dabbling their beaks in the water for a mouthful of mollusks and raising their heads to swallow them.

The flamingo is like no other bird, in that he gathers his food, as it were, while standing on his head. He lowers his beak into the mud or sand at the bottom of a stream until his head is upside down and with his tongue, which is thick, fleshy, and fitted with little spines at the back and edges, filters the water until his spoon-shaped upper mandible is full of the minute

shellfish, plants or seeds which he regards as toothsome. He then has to raise his head before he can swallow them.

We had not come to the tropics on slaughter bent, and though we wanted to see the natives in all their various occupations, we had no intention of encouraging them to kill anything except to obtain food or perhaps an occasional specimen which we might present to a museum; consequently, even though we wanted at least one flamingo, we hesitated to fire into this group of magnificent birds, all so at peace with themselves and their surroundings and all so intently minding their own business.

They saw us when we were still at a distance, but merely moved along through the water a little faster, without losing that dignity, and even *hauteur,* which to a flamingo is a manner born. At fifty yards they became uneasy, and their captain warned them to get on their toes. They sprang into the air in perfect unison and instantly forming their line like drilled soldiers, swept away over the trees. But perhaps their captain was getting old and losing his authority, or perhaps some headstrong youngsters at the end of the line pulled the flock after them; at any rate they changed their course, tacked, and circled around us at no great height, their stretched necks on a perfect level with their slender legs, their bodies making a little lump in the middle, so that they looked like flying bar-pins of red enamel.

Our artist member's shot caught one of them in the leg; we plainly saw the leg droop a couple of inches out of plumb, but the bird was still keeping his place when the line faded into dots moving at airplane speed. We hated to lose that flamingo, knowing he was wounded and likely to perish in misery.

Mournfully we raised a sail and floated down the río for several miles until we arrived at a large island heavy and dark with huge timber and a woven and matted undergrowth. We tried in vain to find a bit of clearing on which we could land, and Loretto finally pushed the boat into the spreading roots of a mangrove tree, over which we crawled above a mucky beach until we reached firm earth.

The mangrove has an ingenious method of insuring an ample water supply and at the same time anchoring itself to the soil by sending down root-suckers from its wide lateral branches. These suckers are tender and so flexible that they can be bent into a circle, but their rounded points bear a hard black cap which under the pressure of the sap and expanding cells behind it forces its way down through the water, mud, gravel, and stones until it is like a bar of rigid iron anchored in bed rock. This root in turn sends out other anchoring suckers, so that it is common to find a tangled, looped root system perhaps a hundred feet across, all emanating from one tree. On some of the smaller islands we found our landing completely barred by these roots until we had chopped our way through them with machetes.

On this island we had pushed inward only a few feet from shore when we found ourselves in a gloomy darkness, hemmed in by a riot of climbing, weaving plants, growing with an almost visible exhilaration. This was genuine jungle, and there was needed only the chatter of monkeys or a jaguar's snarl to give it a story-book completeness. There was no sound, however, not even of a breeze in the tree tops. Instead of sound there was only smell — rank, fetid, and affecting the nostrils like an acid.

We had to wait till the Indians came up with their machetes before we could advance a foot farther. When one reads an explorer's account of cutting a way through a jungle, one forms a picture of a brawny native hacking laboriously with a heavy blade at a wall of vegetation until a breach is formed by sheer weight of metal and muscle. On the contrary, I suspect that provided one is behind an experienced bush-man such as our Loretto was, progress in jungle-cutting is somewhat faster than that. It was edifying to watch Loretto attack this mass which now held us back. So skilfully did he wield his long machete that we could follow him with comparative ease. His method was not to carry the jungle by assault, but to worm his way through its weakest spots, snipping a vine here and lopping a limb there as he walked along. On encountering an unusually dense mass of tangled plants, he simply cut the key obstruction on which the mass depended, as a mason in destroying an arch first removes its keystone. His light, thin blade flashed in circles about his head until he had brought us through a gloomy morass to a clear, grass-grown space bordered with palm trees.

Here we vainly pursued a *kuuk,* a large, dark fox squirrel, from tree to tree in the attempt to get a shot. This was the only animal we sighted on the island. Then we cut down a sheaf of palm leaves with which to make our roof repairs, while Loretto pointed out and gave us the Maya names of the various trees most common in the locality. One of these trees was slashed in a manner somewhat similar to the blazing of pine trees for turpentine in the Southern states of America, and from its crevices Loretto pulled several small gummy drops which he gave us to chew. These drops were *chicle,* the

raw material from which is manufactured the thousands of tons of chewing gum required by North American flappers and readers of tabloid newspapers. American firms hold immense land leases and plantations in Yucatan and the adjoining territory of Quintana Roo, over which armies of sweating chicleros, professional gum tree hunters, are perpetually roaming in a search for untapped forests.

These chicleros, due to their manner of life and comparatively large earnings, form a distinct class in the social life of the peninsula. They have something of the independent individualism and recklessness of the old-time American cowboy, and are much addicted, according to popular stories, to rum, gambling, and fighting. The few whom we encountered, however, were polite, ready to do favors, and quiet in demeanor, though much less taciturn than the Maya who is meeting strangers for the first time. Chicleros are always natives, are generally young and lithe but hard-bitten, and being exposed to unhealthful conditions are seldom long-lived.

From what we could learn, gum-chewing is a very ancient and respected habit among Maya Indians, and it may have filtered into the States from Yucatan by way of Florida, Louisiana, or Texas, with which states the peninsula has traded for many decades. There is a native gum put up and sold in the tienditas, little shops, for local use, and it is not unusual to come upon a group of Mayan young ladies with their jaws working, their faces wearing the dreamy, slightly bovine expression common to Nordic gum-chewers.

## III

We wandered at some length over the island till the sun became high and hot, and we grew thirsty. Loretto said there was no water on this island, but we would soon have plenty. We boarded the cayuco again and threaded the little shallow ríos until we came to a wider channel in sight of the sea. Loretto drew the boat up to what was apparently a hollow stump jutting blackly from the salty ripples made by cross-currents. Into the hollow he dipped a half-gourd and handed it to us to drink from.

"But it's salt water."

"No," said Loretto. "It is *dulce,* fresh."

We drank skeptically. There was no doubt about its freshness. It was also clean and clear. We felt like a chapter from *The Swiss Family Robinson;* it seemed incredible that even in fantastic Yucatan fresh, potable water could be dipped from salt waves; but we soon had the explanation. The fresh water bubbled up through the floor of the sea from one of the underground streams which run below Yucatan's limestone foundation. On land these streams feed the great cenotes, the pool-holding caverns on which, before the introduction of windmill pumps from the United States, the people depended for their water. To encounter one of these cenotes on a blazing day and to bathe in its transparent, pale green water, with the light from an occasional hole far above playing tricks with the shadows, is one of the delights of rural Yucatan.

We drank gourd after gourd of the sweet water purling up from its sea-bedded spring and filled our casks with it. It remained deliciously cool, due to the evaporation from the porous staves of the casks.

As we went along we soon learned to recognize these fresh springs by the difference in hue from the salt water surrounding. Loretto told us that hunters used to be puzzled because deer killed at daylight even on the dryest islands always had water in their stomachs. The explanation was that the deer had learned to wade out into the salt water at night and drink from the springs.

## IV

We rounded a promontory and emerged into a deep cove bordered with luxurious grasses and overhung with green-black foliage. Here the water was so quiet its surface mirrored the azure sky with its grazing white clouds. An exclamation from Andres showed us, near the shore, the upraised head and wide eye of a magnificent flamingo.

There was a scramble for the gun, but something in the lone bird's attitude stayed our hand. It was feeding sporadically, but remained in one spot. As we came nearer, it sounded its distress in the flamingo tone, so curiously like a saxophone, but made no attempt to fly. We then recognized that it could not; its feet were perhaps entangled. As we poled closer, even the Indians were silent. We stood up in the boat and gazed, for here was a rarely beautiful sight — a tall and lustrous bird

rosy red against a tapestry of blue and dark green, like a panel from some old Chinese screen. Andres dropped overboard, splashed through the shallow water, gathered the honking beauty in his arms, and grinningly brought it to the boat, while the flamingo held his nose firmly between the mandibles of its black and red beak.

We took her in tenderly — something in the maidenly distress of the creature having indicated that she was a young and delicate female, which indications we later found to be correct — and for our pains got our ears and noses pecked. We sought for the cause of her ailment and found on her left thigh a thin stream of dried blood. She had been shot in the leg. Not until then did we realize that this was our wounded flamingo of the day before, though she was far from her course. There was much rejoicing, not only because we now had a live flamingo which we could study and admire at close range, but because we had saved her from a slow and solitary death.

With speed we poled back to our rancho to bestow medical attention upon her. After dressing her wounded leg with bandages and ointments worthy of a queen, we constructed a hospital ward for her in a corner of the hut by building a triangular pen of rods. The treatment seemed to ease her, and as soon as she had become convinced that we were not going to eat her raw, she ceased her peckings and querulous cries, and stood up in her pen with some cheerfulness. She seemed interested in our preparations for lunch and we surmised that after twenty-four hours of helplessness she craved food and drink. Andres was certain that a draught of posole, cornmeal stirred in sugared water, would be the thing for her, and made some in a gourd which, after searching our faces with a pene-

trating glance, she accepted and quaffed with gusto. We named her *Rojita* — " little red one " — and felt pleased to have her flaming presence lighting up our weather-beaten home.

But Rojita was restless. To spare her injured leg, she tried to stand on the other one, but it gave way from tiredness, and she sank to the ground, her immense length of folding legs doubling under her awkwardly. A flamingo is not made for sitting on the ground, and she was plainly so ill at ease that we took a large handkerchief, cut holes for her legs, and made a sling with henequen cords tied to the rafters. But this seemed to her an indignity and in an effort to escape she danced on her pink toes until she had entangled herself in the cords. We found her weight was not properly balanced and made an adjustment that for a time satisfied her. We knew this by the way the irritation died out of her voice and the evident gratitude of her murmured comments. She was a gentle creature, and a lady. We dozed off in a siesta, craving sleep after the exertions of the hot day, but awakened to find that Rojita's head, always carried proudly on the double curves of her arching neck, was becoming too heavy for her to hold up. Gradually it sank until it was on a level with her knees. She complained of her state in low, feeble murmurs. Again we adjusted her sling, and we now discovered what we had not suspected before. She had been wounded in the breast as well as the leg. Only one tiny shot had penetrated her body, but from it she was bleeding to death internally. We could only sit back and watch her feeble efforts to hold to life.

By fractions of an inch her head sank lower, the brilliant hues of her back and breast faded, her eyes glazed, and then her neck hung straight down till the pointed beak touched

the ground. At a quarter to five o'clock she died. We were afflicted, and could not stay around when Loretto carefully flayed her with all her feathers intact, while the black zopilotes gathered from the sky.

In her memory we asked Loretto to name the ground where we had found her Rojita's Isle, and so to inform his friends. He agreed, and unless he deceived us it is now *la Isleta de Rojita.*

## VII

## *THE IGUANA BANQUET*

"LORETTO," we said the next day, "if we have to eat any more fish, we shall not survive to return to that America of the North. We have a gun and ammunition. Can't we provide ourselves with a little meat, to guard against monotony in diet?"

"Si, señores," said he. "We can have a tolok steak or a young one well roasted."

Tolok is Maya for iguana. We said we could think of nothing better. We said this in a moment of enthusiasm; it was not wholly true, for we could think of several things better. One would be a can of New Orleans molasses, or a jar of Dundee marmalade, or a gallon of Philadelphia ice cream. The peculiarity of our diet in the Yucatan jungle had set up an acute craving for something sweet. We now understood why *dulces,* candies and cloying syrups of all kinds, have such an enormous sale in tropical Mexico. There is something in the food or the climate, or both together, that makes sugar imperative to the human system. Mexico's stoical soldiers might withstand machine gun or artillery fire until the last man had died in his sandals, but an invader who threw a barrage of chocolates across the border would break up the army and decimate the population.

For acids we occasionally had a hankering too, but it was sweet stuff for which we mostly yearned. Consequently, iguana was not the dish we would have chosen had we been anywhere else than on these bushy but non-fruit-bearing islands.

We had seen plenty of iguana and though, with their armored back-combs, they looked almost as enticing to eat as something out of Dante's Inferno, we were comforted by the thought that their flesh was said to resemble chicken, and it was with high expectations that we followed Loretto and his musket across the ríos to an island which he said was simply running with toloks.

This island was in part barren and desert land, and in part thick with thorn-bushes, thorn-trees, and cactus. We had to cut our way through, every variety of plant opposing us by presenting bayonets, spikes, pins, and needles to our breasts. Luckily we were wearing heavy boots and leggings which, though they made us break out into red rashes of heat, enabled us to crash clumsily along, while Loretto, in his bare feet and thin clothing, flitted easily through every obstruction, his machete as usual being a magic excalibur.

Loretto explained to us that ammunition was expensive; consequently he would show us a way to kill an iguana without wasting powder. We started several iguana which Loretto condemned as too small and got our clothing well spiked with thorns and cactus spines before we raised a large one. We crashed after this reptile as he went scuttling through the bushes and dived into a hole in the ground surmounted by a mound made of the earth he had removed during his excavations.

Loretto then gave us our instructions. A clever iguana has

not only a main entrance to and exit from his home, but several subsidiary ones at the sides and back. Our task was to find and stop up all these holes except two, over one of which Loretto was to mount guard with his machete. In the other we were to stick a pole and scare out the animal if possible so that Loretto could cut him down on emerging.

Extraordinary were the number of holes this thoughtful iguana had provided for himself. No sooner had we stopped up the last than we would discover another one still unplugged. Under Loretto's inspection, however, we at length completed the job and took up our stations. Diligently we chugged our open hole with a pole, making ostentatious noises, while Loretto stood poised over the other. The iguana did not fail to come out, but it was at an unplugged hole none of us had found. We could see the grasses waving above him as he skedaddled safely into a swamp. Loretto wiped his sweating face, surveyed us gravely, and remarked that it would perhaps be best, after all, to shoot an iguana.

We took up the trail through the thickets again, now bogged in swamps that sucked madly at our feet, and again on shell-covered little plains where the heat baked our faces as if they were Virginia hams. There was no lack of iguanas; they scuttled over logs and rattled up tree trunks to right and left. But we could not get a shot because the crashing of our heavy boots through the dry thorns warned them of an enemy's approach. Loretto continued to preserve his tranquil face; in a moment, he said, he would get one.

We were at Loretto's heels on the edge of a little río when he held up a hand and pointed. Stretched in the sun in the crotch of a great grey tree lay an iguana about three feet long,

his eyes half closed. Only part of his head and a shoulder were visible, the rest of his body being obscured by leaves. Loretto offered to let one of us shoot but, remembering his economy in shells, we declined. Loretto seemed to aim for half an hour; he stood motionless until he and his gun were in perfect accord. He fired; the iguana raised his quivering blinded face, and crashed loudly to the ground where his brilliant blood spouted a vermilion pattern over the grey and black leaves.

It was unnecessary to give a finishing blow to our victim; he was thoroughly dead, the charge having cut his jugular vein. We could not suppress a welling up of pity for the little saurian as he lay with toes upcurled. We recalled the historical eminence of his family; the iguana is the lineal descendant of the great saurians of the earth's remote past, those vast armored reptiles who could, so to speak, swallow an elephant for an appetizer, bite the top from a tree for a salad, and wash it all down with part of a river.

## II

Now for the long trek homeward and for what we supposed would be an even longer voyage; we had lost all sense of direction, and we were fagged and thirsty on a barren island. But when we came out at the cove's lower edge, there was Andres sitting in a boat waiting for us, grinning at the sight of the iguana. We had worked our way up to a point almost opposite our own rancho, from which Andres had seen us and

had crossed the intervening streams in a native dug-out borrowed from visitors who had meantime landed on our island.

We asked Andres if he had any water in the boat. He said no, but he would soon get us some. He led us a hundred yards inland to a spot where there had once been a *nah,* native house, which contained a small cocoanut grove. Under the feathery limbs were luscious clusters of the green, the divine, fruit, full of translucent, greyish milk and lined with a baby-soft, succulent white flesh a quarter of an inch thick.

One is seldom of a single mind about Nature. There are times when she is only a stupid old woman, guilty of innumerable frauds, lapses, and errors, and addicted to sleep and obscenity; there are other moments when her cleverness, her thoughtful charity, and her ingenious sense of appropriateness appear to be uncanny, and leave no doubt that she is Minerva herself. Consider tropical lands, so often cursed with areas that are hot, barren, and dry. Into these Nature has graciously introduced the cocoanut, which is simply a patented package of a light food combined with a delicious, cooling drink — the very one for the tropics' afflicted children.

Andres was no fairy-like being, but he scurried up the tall trunks of those palms, gripping them with the hollows of his bare soles and his powerful arms, with the ease of an iguana, and threw us down enough cocos to fill a barrel. The native consumes his cocoanuts green. Holding a nut in one hand, with a machete in the other he slashes off the tough top. The miracle by which he regularly escapes chopping off his hand is one of the world's wonders. The husk — in Spanish *casco* — is trimmed down flat until a hole appears. You apply the hole to your mouth, throw your head back, and let the liquid

ecstacy flood the recesses of your hot being. In the larger towns of Yucatan cocoa juice is sold to you in a glass with ice, but the wise prefer the inimitable flavor given to it by contact of the lips with the casco.

After I had drained my first cocoanut, I tried to scrape out the thin pulp with a pocket knife. This knife, besides having a large blade, was fitted with almost every imaginable kind of glittering gadget, and more than once I had seen Loretto's eye fall upon it wistfully. He now signed to me to give him the knife and nut, and with a single motion he cut off a spoon-shaped slice of the fibrous husk. It fitted the curved sides of the nut's interior as if made for it and was immensely more efficient than a knife blade.

Thereafter we never sat down to a cocoanut feast that Loretto did not ask for this knife. He loved it, and never tired of fingering its numerous gadgets. Eventually I gave it to him. He protested that he could not accept it, since I might need it myself; but his refusal was somewhat weak, and finally he pocketed it, saying only *gracias,* but with a telling gleam in his eye. He also called me *mæstro,* master, which was flattering and was pay enough.

We got the other boat and ferried our iguana over to camp where we found a party of four men and a boy ready to join us in a feast. All were of a dark-brown color except one man of about forty-five years wearing a spreading sombrero and a chin-strap with which to hold it on. He was so white as to be startling, but he spoke nothing but Maya and his actions were those of a native.

Two of his companions were young fellows in their early twenties, while the fourth man was a thin, swarthy native who

kept staring at us searchingly from under his mat of hair. This man followed me out to the boat where he addressed me obsequiously. He wanted to know if I was a man of *negocios,* business, and when I replied no, he said he had something pretty to show me. He drew a long parcel from under his arm. It contained the feathers of the white egret, in which there is extensive smuggling trade to the United States and Europe despite the prohibitions of the Mexican government. He said

*River Turtles*

he would sell me the lot for a sum which I could quadruple at Progreso, Yucatan's leading port. But I declined, and he withdrew without another word. So far, he was the only sinister person I had marked in Yucatan and I was glad to be rid of him.

At the time I attached no great importance to his proffer, but in view of incidents which occurred later, I afterwards wondered whether he was alone in his egret enterprise and what his real purpose was in trying to make a buyer of me.

## III

Andres' preliminary treatment of the iguana was of the briefest description. He merely washed him off in the río and laid him across the embers glowing between the triangle of stones which is the historic Maya fireplace. He turned the body over a few times until its skin had begun to puff up. He then tore off the tough hide in pieces and again laid the body on the fire. When it was well roasted he called us four and our five guests to the feast.

I was under the conviction that iguana flesh was comparable to chicken and tasted much like it. I had read the statement several times in various books. But I could detect no resemblance, however remote, between this meat and any other I had ever tasted. It was very dark and though not at all tough, tasted like nothing except iguana. It might suffer a faint comparison with opossum, but solely on account of its richness. I ate part of the breast and a couple of vertebrae without trouble, but a hind leg brought defeat; that leg had covered too much ground and climbed too many trees to taste like anything but steel and wire. I rose to throw it away; whereupon the Indians all arose as one and cried out. I bowed to the rebuke and acknowledged a tendency to Nordic wastefulness. That was not the end of the iguana, however. He reappeared at the next meal and again at breakfast as iguana hash.

## VIII

# *THE TIGER HUNT*

ALL this time we had been impatient to start on a jaguar hunt and even had dreams of carrying home the hide of old Red Paws himself. After the iguana banquet and the ensuing siesta were over, we broached the subject to Loretto. He said it was best to hunt *tigre* at night but the moon had been rising too early. However, we might try that night; meantime we would go over to an island well liked by the animal and look for signs.

We dropped down the río, threaded several channels, and landed on a large island washed by rollers from the Gulf. We walked along the beach until we reached a spot where the sand had been left smooth by the tide. A naturalist would have gone loco with joy over that spot, for it was dotted and criss-crossed with the innumerable hieroglyphs and autographs of the furred and feathered people of this isolated world; and once more we sorrowed that we knew so little of the animals and birds of the country that we could not read the histories and messages so plainly inscribed.

At one point, however, we encountered a moving picture, recorded only in footprints, which was plain enough. A padded-claw animal which Loretto could only say had been

some kind of *gato,* wildcat, had been quietly rambling along the beach when he spied an iguana trickling along at some distance ahead of him. He had dropped to his belly and crawled after the saurian, with the intention of smiting him from behind. The quarry had for a time suspected nothing, but had suddenly become alarmed and had dug his toes into the beach in an effort to escape. The pursuer had tried to rush him, his long bounds with their wide spacing being clearly depicted. Apparently the iguana had been overtaken, for there was a flurry outlined in the sand indicating a severe crisis. But the cat must have overshot his mark, for the iguana's frantic tracks had turned off at right angles and disappeared into one of the holes which he and his relatives have thoughtfully provided for themselves in a world unsafe for iguanas. The cat had made no effort to follow the fugitive to his hole, but had walked around the battle-ring once or twice, and then walked away, probably in disgust.

We tried to get Loretto to say that the pursuer might have been a young jaguar; but no, the tracks were not that kind; they were a gato's tracks and nothing else. This was baffling, for to a Yucatan Indian anything that has fur and four legs is a gato, whether it be a house-cat or a puma.

We left the smooth beach behind and encountered a stretch broken by small dunes and ridges, sewn with bushes and vines. Here, imbedded in the sand, we found a huge conch-shell, its inner convolutions colored a deep pink. In old Maya sculptures a man dressed in ceremonial plumes, probably a *nacon,* priest, is occasionally seen blowing a conch, and the legend is that signals between coastal villages and festal music were both made on these great shells; so we asked Loretto if

he could sound a signal or blow a Maya melody on this specimen. He said he could do both. With his machete he trimmed off one end of the shell into a conical mouthpiece, raised it to his mouth, and blew with the tightened lips of a cornetist. The signal seemed to be a series of sharp blasts followed by longer ones, and the tune, if there was any, was a long, rhythmic rising and falling of weird sound which could be heard at a far distance.

It was late in the afternoon and already the waning light had begun to redden, and Loretto, standing on a little promontory, with his conch shell to his lips and his head thrown back, made a silhouette which might have been contained in a painted panel on some old Maya wall.

## II

A FEW yards farther we discovered the first padded tracks of a jaguar, and immediately knew something of the sensation felt by Robinson Crusoe when, one day, wandering on his lonely island, he encountered in the sand the footprints of a human being.

The jaguar had apparently been accompanied or followed by a smaller animal, for we were able to follow their parallel trails for some distance through the bushes that skirted the beach, until finally they disappeared into a swamp.

This, at last, was what we had been looking for and we cheerfully followed Loretto back to the cayuco and returned to camp where we again dined on re-roasted iguana flesh, and

afterwards set about getting our equipment into order so as to be ready to deal death to the inhabitants of Tiger Island.

We found that Loretto's brass shells were all loaded with bird-shot, consequently it was necessary to remove these and substitute large buck-shot of a weight sufficient to penetrate a tiger. Loretto had used these shells for many years, re-loading them after use and freshly capping them each time. On occasion, these caps failed to ignite the powder, merely clicking with a sickeningly weak sound, so that even if we came up with a jaguar, we could not be sure that we should be actually able to fire upon him. It might be necessary to fight the duel out with machetes.

Loretto filled the tank of his head-lamp with fresh carbide, polished the glass and reflector, and otherwise showed that this was going to be an important occasion. We also took along a hand flashlight, which was proudly borne by the little Indian boy, Demetrio. He pleaded so hard, with large moist eyes, to be allowed to go along that Loretto consented to take him, provided he would keep quiet, not move unless so ordered, and would breathe only at intervals.

We pushed the boat off into a school of the shallows-loving fish called *robalo,* who instantly cut the quiet night into jagged flashes. We were still in the shallows when Loretto spied a pair of yellow-green eyes protruding from the water and reached for his gun. He dropped this, however, for his harpoon and pointed out a little alligator lying half asleep in the warm water. He did not attempt to stab this baby, but merely laid the shaft of the harpoon across his back and held him down, while Andres tumbled over the side of the boat and seized the youngster by the snout and tail, holding him closely against

his breast so that his flying claws could do no damage. The baby bawled and cried like any human infant, but Loretto subdued him by wrapping his nose in strips of dried palm fiber, and dropped him into the bottom of the boat as if he were of no more consequence than a stick of wood.

We had previously asked Loretto and Andres whether it were possible to catch a 'gator alive, using nothing but their bare hands, and they had assured us it was, and they would prove it. They now asked us if we were satisfied that it could be done, and upon our assenting, poled over to Tiger Island.

Andres attended to the navigation and Loretto stood up in the bow with the long finger of white light spurting from his head, outlining fantastic shadows in the trees. We had vaguely supposed that we would land on the island, but instead Loretto ordered the boat to sweep around its edges while he poked into the bushes on the beach with his beam of light. Very quietly our boat was pushed into a little bay densely bordered with bush that hung far over the water's edge. Loretto crouched low in the bow and ran his spotlight very slowly along the black shore. Suddenly a pair of glimmering eyes were clearly outlined against the black curtain, apparently a mile away but probably not more than a hundred yards distant. The mysterious eyes glared steadily at our light for a full five seconds, and then went out as if some hand had switched off the current.

Stopping the boat by digging the poles deeply into the mud, we waited several minutes for those glowing circles to reappear in the darkness, but when they failed to do so we pushed along farther, while Loretto kept up the low-toned, ceaseless patter of injunctions which he habitually addressed to Andres at times like this.

In another moment, another pair of eyes flashed out and also faded, and then a third pair did the same only a few feet distant. This was getting exciting, and I could hear little Demetrio's tiny lungs struggling to subdue the loud breathing about which he had been severely threatened, so that his breath came and went in little gasps.

We stopped the boat, looking and listening painfully in the plushlike darkness, Loretto's light dancing among the bushes and revealing forms in which we were sure we could see innumerable jaguars.

And then the still air was rent by a wail. It was a freezing cry with a snarl at the end that made even the self-contained Loretto jump with excitement. An instant later this solitary cry was followed by a tangled series of coughs, screams, and throaty raspings. It was evident that somewhere over in the bush, at a distance from the shore, two wild animals were having a savage fight. Loretto and Andres started a murmured argument to decide whether we should land and try to slip up on the combatants, but it was decided that it would be poor policy to leave the boat just now, because animals were astir and at any instant we might discover another pair of glaring eyes. We did so at that very moment.

The eyes, a greenish-yellow, flashed out from the darkness like a pair of motor headlights. They were fastened intently upon Loretto's light, we and the boat, of course, being invisible to the gazer. Andres drove the cayuco up so close that it seemed as if the owner of those eyes might at any instant leap upon us, and then Loretto fired.

The sound of the gun was followed by a rasping, choking sound, and without a second's hesitation Loretto jumped off

into the shallows and splashed his way into the bushes, machete in hand. He was followed by little Demetrio who ignored the calls of Andres and likewise vanished into the bushes, valiantly holding the pocket flashlight in front of him.

There was a long, silent pause while the two lights played back and forth on the shore, and then Loretto appeared dragging a large animal behind him. In the distorting lights the animal appeared to be at least as large as a lion, but when it was dragged over the boat side we found it was a 'coon! It was true it was much larger and heavier than the common North American racoon, and owned a much longer and bushier tail, but its head, eyes, and whiskered snout all indicated that if not actually a 'coon, it was closely related to the 'coon family.

Loretto and Andres called it a ring-tailed gato, but afterwards we learned it was a coati mundi, a member of the bear family to which the racoon belongs.

This was not a tiger, but it was at least a gato, and we felt satisfied that our next encounter would be with the spotted chieftain himself. In a few moments our light revealed another pair of eyes, seemingly much larger than the dead coati's, but when Loretto had again made a successful kill it proved to be a somewhat larger relative of the victim we already had in the boat.

We poled about the bays and coves of the island for some time in the hope of stirring up a genuine jaguar, but the rising of the moon, with its all-illuminating flood of light, brought an end to the hunt, and we turned back homeward, without a *tigre,* to be sure, but having had enough excitement to wipe out any regret.

## III

"WHAT are you making, Andres?" we said the next morning. He was digging a hole in the ground outside the hut.

"A *pib*," he said.

We had heard of the *pib* form of roasting, which was a favorite among the ancient Mayas, and watched closely while Andres went about his preparations. Loretto had already skinned the coatis, stretching their hides on an ingeniously made frame of rods, and now we were going to eat the bodies. We had never eaten wildcat before, but having just made away with an iguana successfully, we were not going to be balked by a coati's flesh.

Andres dug a hole about two feet deep, in the bottom of which he built a fire and allowed it to burn down to the hot embers. These embers he covered with stones which became red hot. Upon these he laid the bodies of the coatis, without removing the entrails. He then covered the bodies about three inches deep with the leaves and twigs of the *sakokum* tree. Over this was placed a layer of green palm leaves, which in turn were covered with a burlap sack. He then threw in earth until a little mound stood up above the surface of the ground and filled in all the chinks until no smoke emerged. By the time we had returned, he said, the gatos would be ready to eat.

We asked Loretto where we were going now and he replied that we would go off to look for some alligator eggs, which go very well with roasted gato. With visions, then, of a luncheon of roasted wildcat and scrambled alligator eggs, we hoisted

the sail of our cayuco and sailed up the río for a couple of miles until we came to a long, narrow sandbar sprinkled with mangrove bushes.

We skirted the shores of this bar until hidden in a clump of low trees we found an enormous heap of grey calcareous sand. This, Loretto said, was an alligator nest. First making sure that the mother alligator was not nearby, we cut poles, sharpened the ends, and began to dig into the mound. The sand was about six feet deep and though on the top it was easily moved, a few inches below the surface it became hard-packed and we were soon pouring with sweat under a blistering sun as we dug for the heart of the nest. We uncovered the remains of several old eggs with their wrinkled, parchment-like shells, but no fresh eggs appeared. It soon became evident that this nest was no longer being used, and we dug up the surface of the sand for several rods in every direction but without discovering any deposits.

Loretto said he thought there was no use looking any longer here, so we boarded the boat again and sailed farther up the río until we arrived at a large, triangular island formed by the silt deposited by converging streams. This silt being very fertile, it had given rise to a rich green grass, multitudinous flowers, and luxuriant trees. In the middle of the island we came upon an unusually large and well-built hut, with several smaller structures in line with it. In the río was a dense growth of cocoanut palms planted in regular rows. At one time this evidently had been an organized habitation, perhaps even the nucleus of a village. Loretto seemed to know it well, but he had not enough Spanish, nor we enough Mayan, to understand his explanation.

While we were standing at the edge of the big house admiring its sturdy construction, we noticed a rustling in the nearby bushes and the ears of a large black animal suddenly appeared. One member of our party instantly reached for the gun, and was checked just in time by Loretto and Andres, who explained that the beast was only the house-cat, which had lived here several years in solitary splendor and had grown fat on the abundance of food to be found on this rich spot.

They enjoyed the joke tremendously. We afterwards found that notwithstanding his somewhat taciturn demeanor under ordinary circumstances, the average Maya enjoys nothing quite so much as a good joke at the expense of a friend.

We searched this and the surrounding islands for alligator nests but met with no luck, and again boarded our boat to find that a fierce norther had sprung up and that we could not safely buck it. Loretto recommended that to get back home we take a roundabout way, and on our consenting, sailed a narrow río until we came to the broad waters of the Gulf, where the surf pounded on low dunes. Here we tried to cut across the breakers, but the wind and the currents were against us and despite our utmost exertions, all four of us diligently manning the poles, we found ourselves being carried out into the open Gulf. Three times we had almost succeeded in making the passage when we were caught by the wind and forced back, and at last all four of us had to pile out into the shallow water and shove the cayuco back by main force. The surf pounded us in the face and all our efforts to shout advice to each other were drowned by great combers of salt water, most of which seemed to pour down our throats. Finally Loretto hauled up a leg-of-mutton sail and we rode before the wind

out into the Gulf and then tacked and approached the land again.

We found that to get back into the ríos we must go through a narrow opening or boca, not more than eight feet across, which was guarded with spikey trees and drifted thorn bushes. If we missed the opening we would be thrown headlong into this thorn-bearing debris, and our hearts contracted just a little as, driven by the wind, we shot across the surf like a cannon ball and headed for the opening. The Indians made us get down into the bottom of the boat, and coolly wielding their long thin poles with carefully timed thrusts, we rode through the exact center of the boca on the shoulders of a huge roller. We emerged onto the bosom of a quiet río which was as still as the surf ten feet behind us was stormy. It was a masterly performance on the part of the two Indians, but they appeared to be surprised at our burst of applause for their efforts and our little hymn of thanksgiving.

We took a circuitous route homewards and stopped at the island where we had hunted tiger the night before, to see if we could discover any fresh tracks, but " no hay," said the Indians — " There is none "; and we returned to our rancho to find in the back end of our hut, occupying our lost Rojita's pen, another tall, red flamingo. Our Indian guests had taken a little sail on their own account, had brought back some fish which were already roasting over a fire, and had discovered in a shallow this bird, which was apparently sick.

" Maybe this is Rojita's brother," said one of the Indians; but if it was, this bird was much older than Rojita, and by no means so beautiful or in such good condition. It was a male, and his wing feathers were dirty and broken. He was also,

*The Alligator Hunt*

perhaps due to his low physical condition, irritable, and attacked our faces with his hooked beak whenever we approached his pen.

And then we opened the *pib*. The coatis lay there, perfectly done. They were torn apart and the pieces distributed around the circle of nine people. The meat tasted strongly of smoke and leaves, but on account of our morning's exertions we were prepared to eat the flesh of a boa constrictor if necessary, and bare bones of coati mundis soon accumulated in a little pile for the zopilotes to polish.

## IV

That night we again went out on a search for *tigres* and with our searchlights we probed bushes and several small islands without result.

We saw no other eyes glowing in the darkness, but as we went along we found the ríos full of alligators and Loretto abandoned his gun for a harpoon. He successfully stabbed two moderate sized specimens, and then we came upon a much larger 'gator from behind, as he lay quietly in the yellow water. The harpoon seemed to strike home, but after Loretto's hard thrust he barely escaped being pulled into the water, and Andres rushed into the bow to help his brother hold the quivering raw-hide lariat, while the 'gator churned the water under the boat madly and pounded its sides with his heavy tail. The Indians called us to help them hold on and it required the four of us, pulling with all strength, to drag the brute's head to the surface where he could be stunned by the

blow of a mallet. But even as we dragged him over the side of the boat he again gave battle and with his tail knocked the three Indians into the río.

To our astonishment they did not hesitate to lay hands on the animal to prevent his reaching the water again, and it took all five of us with poles and mallets to beat him into submission. We found there was a good reason for the fury of his battle.

*Loading Pack Saddle, Seen from Above*

He had been harpooned only through the left forefoot, and we felt it was a miracle that some of us had not been smashed in our efforts to put him out of action.

We steered our way back home under a moon rising through intensely black clouds accompanied by a display of stars such as we never see in the misty climates of the north. But notwithstanding our nearness to the equator, the norther had thoroughly chilled the night air and our teeth were knocking together as we pulled spare sails up around us and tried to keep

warm. The hut, with its fire in the corner, was gratifyingly cozy, and we and our brown guests were glad to gather around and rub our hands over the blaze which made our rancho appear to be situated rather within the arctic circle than in the tropics.

We produced a tiny bottle of *habanero* which we had brought along for snake-bites and other emergencies, and passed it around. Thus encouraged, the time and the atmosphere seemed favorable for a bit of choral singing and everybody eagerly assented when it was proposed that we have some songs. There was a little difficulty, however, in drilling the chorus, since part of us knew only songs in English, another part knew only Spanish ones, while the rest of us could recall ballads only in Maya.

However, one tall Maya youth, who had hitherto been silent and diffident, became a new man under the stimulus of the occasion and offered two ballads in Spanish which, like others of their kind, made much use of the words *amor,* "love," and *corazón,* "heart." One of them, which he sang quite fetchingly in a clear, smooth tenor voice, we recognized as the ever popular "*Nunca* (Never)," by the Yucatan poet and composer, Cardenas, a favorite among serenaders and other troubadors of the night. It voices the plaint of a lover who realizes he is never to kiss the mouth, "mouth of burning purple," of his lady.

"Yo sé que inutilmente te venero
E inutilmente el corazón te evoca,
Pero a pesar de todo yo te quiero,
Pero a pesar de todo yo te quiero,
Aunque nunca besar pueda tu boca."

## IX

## *THE RETURN AND THE ARREST*

DURING the week that we hunted, fished, sailed, swam, ate, and slept with these good Mayas we observed no trace of the degeneracy which is sometimes attributed to the modern descendants of the vigorous people who seven centuries ago and more, in a great loop or semicircle which passed through Honduras, Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche, Tobasco, Chiapas, and Guatemala, laid out broad cities, carved huge monoliths, painted great panoramas on sculptured walls, wrought cunningly in jade and turquoise, perfected a calendar, and began a written history.

On the contrary, it seemed to us they had preserved to a remarkable degree not only their racial but their human integrity. And this despite the corruptions which ensued simultaneously with the arrival of their Spanish conquerors more than four hundred years ago.

Those conquistadores! Romantic history and fanciful legend have painted them as indomitable if cruel, masterful if unscrupulous, and as seers of shining visions. But all the available evidence indicates that the conquistadores were little better than matter-of-fact commercial travellers, with the mentality of piecework pirates and the magnanimity of beef butchers.

They were takers, not makers. With them they brought almost nothing that was good or noteworthy, save only their graceful, solid architecture, and that was derived from their own despised artists or from unknown Moorish masons. They conquered the Indian's body, indeed, and impressed their beliefs on his imagination, but something within the Indian remained the same — silent, passive, but imperishably resistant.

It is significant that the Mayas of Yucatan have preserved their language virtually in the form used when their forefathers were lords of the peninsula. The Spaniards who came with and after Cortes were persistent and thorough invaders. Wherever they landed they stamped out the language, the customs, the government, the architecture, and the religion of the conquered, substituting for them their own importations. In every respect the Mayas were overborne save in their language. This they adhered to and still maintain with a calm persistence which indicates that at heart the race preserves a formidable vitality. In Yucatan today Spanish is the language of commerce, but Maya is the language of the people. The foreign visitor who deals with them must know his Maya as well as his Spanish.

The natives of the southern and eastern portions of the Yucatan peninsula may be, as reported by some explorers, in part a feeble, drunken and untrustworthy lot; but most of the Mayas of the north with whom we mingled still maintain the tranquillity and poise which is so evident in the figures graven on their walls.

As soon as we were accepted among them, we were treated as equals. In their attitude was visible no trace of servility on the one hand, or of a prying boldness on the other. From the

first the Marrufos made us feel that we were their guests rather than their employers, and that what they were doing was as much for their own enjoyment as for their daily wage as guides.

For instance, we tried several times to induce them, when meals were ready, to eat with us. On festal occasions, such as the iguana and coati banquets, or when time was short, they did so of their own accord; but usually they served us first and waited till we were half finished before they began their own meal. In time we realized that they did this for two reasons: first, to see that we were well provided for, and secondly, so that they could chat together in their own language without the constraint which our presence as foreigners imposed. As soon as it was clear that they really preferred to have their meals slightly apart from us, it seemed natural enough and we did not press them further.

## II

We had by now intended to prolong indefinitely our stay among these enchanted isles; for the novelty of and the interest in our surroundings was still very great, and we had not yet come up with a live "tiger," visited the flamingo nesting grounds, or explored the numerous islands to the east and south, where there are ancient chapels and burial mounds which remain hidden by the thick Yucatecan bush and which mark the ancient trail of the Red Tiger.

We were by no means adequately equipped for archæological

exploration, either in knowledge or instruments, but already we had had a taste of the gripping fascination which accompanies an attempted delving into the Past.

The pursuit of the secrets of the past, we found, brings on a burning but pleasant fever, accompanied by a quickened pulse; induces a glitter in the eye, and provokes a tendency to solitary brooding. The true archæological enthusiast is a being no longer of this world; the passage of time, the qualities of space, have no meaning for him; he becomes indifferent to meals, temperatures, taxes, home ties, and politics. He dwells on a planet whose atmosphere is a mild delirium. It is possible that he is distracted only momentarily even by his own death.

For instance, there was the case of Teoberto Maler, the soldier of fortune and of Maximilian, who came to Mexico with the French invaders, drifted to Yucatan, and eventually allowed his entire being to be dissolved by contact with Maya art and archæology, just as insects are dissolved in the cups contained in the bodies of certain carnivorous plants. Even in poverty he used his gifts as an artist to make reproductions of Maya relics, and became much sought after by museums. He soon lost interest in mundane actualities, quarrelled with his friends, withdrew into a broody solitude in which he dreamed of magnificent temples as yet unrevealed, and finally died of the fever which consumed his imagination as well as his flesh.

There, too, was Edward H. Thompson, for many years American Consul at Merida, who was so consumed by the desire to see what was at the bottom of the sacred well at Chichen Itza that he finally resigned his post, bought the land which the ancient city rested on, and spent deliriously happy months and a fortune in dredging gold, stone, copper

and jade objects from the mud of the giant hole, many of them never duplicated elsewhere.

And finally there was Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, the savant and traveller, who, with his wife, gave up all other occupations to dig into Yucatecan soil for its Maya treasures, enduring poverty, privation and heat, until at Chichen he had discovered the famous human figure which he wrongly called the Chac Mool — a name that properly belongs to the Tiger God — and had convinced himself that it was emigrating Mayas who founded Egyptian civilization.

One would be wrong in viewing such absorption either as lunacy or fanaticism, for any pursuit which can so intensify the sense of life is to be regarded with respectful consideration.

## III

Our intentions to remain longer among these coralline islands were nullified by an awkward discovery. Since money in Mexico must be carried in silver coins, there being no paper currency, we had brought along a bulky bag of pesos which we believed ample; but on counting up, we found we had thoughtlessly left behind the greater part of our appropriation, and that we only had with us enough to pay off our guides and finance the journey back to Merida. If we were to lengthen our stay, we must return there for more pesos.

We explained the situation to our companions, reluctantly packed our things, and sadly began the long voyage back. With a comfortable load of 'gator and gato skins, which the Mar-

rufos were to sell for their own benefit, we cast off early in the morning, tilting into a sharp breeze which caused us to tack frequently. Since in crossing the broad ríos and threading narrow channels, we were constantly raising and lowering our sails, we were forced to become deckhands-in-ordinary to Captain Loretto and Helmsman Andres.

As able seamen on a Maya vessel we were conspicuously unable. We misunderstood their directions, were slow in execution when we did understand, clewed up the sails too taut or too loose, and vainly tried to be elaborate and thorough when we only had to be simple and quick. However, the *chem* — which by now we had learned was the preferable Maya word for boat, instead of the trisyllabic if more musical Spanish word cayuco — continued to make progress, as if indulgent toward our landsmen's ignorance; and since the skipper remained patient and Andres did not laugh at us too much, we soon learned the simple Maya methods, recovered our confidence, and at length drew approving nods from the watchful captain in the bow.

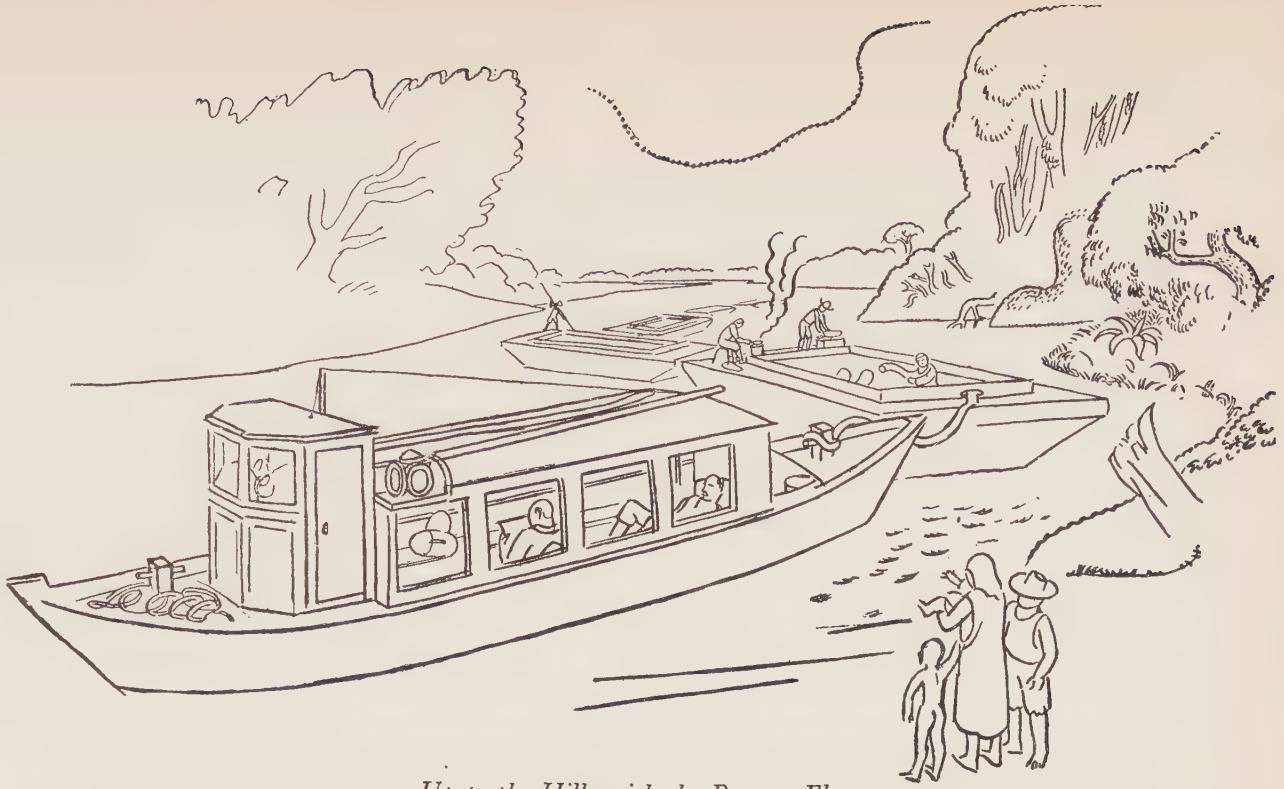
In an hour we had traversed the last of the larger ríos and poled into a series of narrow aqueous avenues over which the bordering trees threw out limbs so low and dense that we were continually ducking to avoid being swept overboard. These thin passages occasionally widened into broad lagoons where the water lay like a plated mirror in a frame of green and old silver. Wading the shores or resting in groups on dead trees were scarlet flamingos, blue herons, and white egrets, holding themselves as motionless as Egyptian gravures on stone.

## IV

To exaggerate the delights of travel in retrospect is easy. The memory readily discards the disagreeable and retains only the pleasant, though there may have been hours and even days of discomfort against mere moments of exhilaration. Travel is wholly subjective, and the traveller's mind must carry along its own palette with which to gild the panorama before him; otherwise he would better remain near his slippers and evening lamp. The attempt " to get away from it all " is often frustrated by the discovery that " it all " is prone to go along too, and to rear its ghostly, hydra heads behind every effulgent sunset, every fairy battlement.

But even at the time, there was no question in our minds about the deliciousness of these particular moments. Because the currents were with us, the poling was easy, and we left navigation to our Maya stalwarts while we simply sat down and gazed at the hanging curtains of these cool, watery corridors.

There were rows of pelicans, packed tight with smug, Nordic respectability and inflated up to their eyes with complacency and self-righteousness, silhouetted in their grey bankers' suits against a tropic tapestry of contorted trees, draped with leaping lianas and spiked with saprophytic plants; or an iguana with his head stuck into a hollow for coolness while his body hung down the tree trunk, baking his backbone luxuriously in the sun; or dense clusters of mangroves rearing themselves from a swamp like a thousand-legged insect and with their multi-



*Up to the Hills with the Banana Fleet*

tudinous limbs and roots weaving the face of the jungle into grotesque patterns. Butterflies as big as an open hand flapped their cobalt wings across our faces, several times almost causing a capsize as we snatched at them. Slinking animals parted the bushes just ahead of us, always disappearing in time to prevent our seeing more than a formless form.

The show ended when we ran out of a boca, mouth of a stream, hoisted our sails, and crossed a line of breakers into the rolling waters of the Gulf. We stood straight out to sea, for the wind was now against us and we needed plenty of room for tacking. Though the breeze was strong enough to play melodies in our rigging, we were now out under a sun which hammered on our heads as if it were of metal. Even palm leaves stuffed into our straw sombreros helped little, and only the fact that we were kept constantly wet by spray enabled us to withstand the crackling midday heat.

## V

We reached our tiny port in the afternoon; were greeted, by the inhabitants who had seen us off, with as much heartiness as if we had been absent a year; and were considering this to be a pleasant sort of planet, when the anti-climax came.

On the outskirts of the little group which had congratulated us on our safe return had hung a tall, swart individual wearing a wide, grey felt sombrero with a pinched-in crown, of the kind affected by minor Mexican officials. This man now called

us aside, narrowed his eyes like the old-fashioned villain of the melodramatic stage, and without preliminaries asked in a menacing tone what we had been doing.

"Hunting and fishing," was our reply.

"Nothing else?" he demanded, drawing closer.

"No. But why are you so interested, señor?"

"You took some photographs, no?"

Idlers began to gather around and stare. Our swart friend's breath smelled of alcohol and his posture was unsteady. We had taken along a small, cheap camera with which we had made a few photographs around our rancho, but we had attached no importance to them and had in fact forgotten them. But who was this individual who wanted to know? We asked him.

"I am the celador," he announced.

Celador? This meant nothing to us. What was a celador and what were his functions? It was plain that this man intended no good, and in front of the crowd his bearing was becoming more and more menacing. Before the colloquy extended further, we demanded the services of an interpreter.

"You need no interpreter," he ruled. "You understand Spanish. You are speaking it to me now."

"But as a protection to ourselves and to make sure that we are understood, we want an interpreter. Also, if you are an official, we wish to see some sign of your authority before we answer any more questions."

After further argument he agreed to send for a native of the village who could speak both Spanish and English, and led the way across the plaza to a room where he produced his credentials as celador.

The interpreter — a youth wearing an unmistakably American cap who informed us he had once driven motor cars in New Orleans — arrived in time to enlighten us further. A celador was a coast guard belonging to the *Resguardia Marina,* charged with the detection of smugglers and the protection of Federal waters.

Smugglers? We suddenly recalled the Indian at our island who had been so eager to sell us contraband egret feathers. Had he been acting at any one's instigation?

"Why this examination?" we asked. "What are we charged with?"

"You took photographs, yes or no?" broke in the celador.

"Yes, but we have taken photographs in several other places in Yucatan."

"To take photographs on the coast of Mexico, you must have a permiso. Did you have a permiso?"

"No."

"Then you have violated the law, and I am going to hold you."

"Until when?"

"Until I receive instructions from my superiors."

"How long will that take?"

"We shall see."

We protested that we had taken no pictures along the coast, but only along the inland ríos. However, the celador was excited both by alcohol and by the display of his own authority. His attitude was prejudiced and hostile, and recognizing the fact that we should not benefit by further arguments, we informed him he might do as he liked, but we would hold him

responsible for any undue detention. This statement the interpreter refused to translate.

On the previous day the artist member of our party had cut his foot on sharp shells lying hidden in the water. We had bandaged it with whatever materials were handy, but there was danger of infection unless it was properly treated. We called the celador's attention to this, whereupon he agreed to release the sufferer, but announced that he meant to hold *el jefe de la expedición* — the head of the expedition. We protested that there was no jefe or expedición either, but the celador was firm; he must have some one to hold; so the expedicion's artist was permitted to board the mule-car bound for the railroad while its writer was *detenido,* " detained."

There being no jail in the hamlet, I was not locked up, but since the only means of escape through the surrounding swamp was by the mule-car which departed once a day, I was as safely immured as if behind walls. The village's one merchant told me he would put up a hammock for me in an empty hut, used as a storage warehouse, where I might sleep. I dropped my bags there, and then being thirsty, went over to the cantina in the hope of finding a bottle of mineral water, the village's ordinary drinking water being highly alkaline. Only two other customers were present, and they were the celador and the interpreter!

They were just draining, with an air of triumph, a glass of habanero. It seemed to be the proper thing to ignore each other, which we did, standing side by side, they with their glasses of alcohol and I with my virtuous bottle of mineral water. The fat bartender, who like every other soul in the hamlet, must have known what had occurred, stared from one

to the other with popping eyes, but made no remark, and it was in a strange and no doubt a comic silence, that I paid my score and walked out.

## VI

In my hammock I had a peaceful siesta, and then in the late afternoon walked down the chief promenade to a *refresquería,* in which fruit drinks were being made for and sold to native patrons. The proprietor, a burly, dark Indian with a double chin, welcomed me, called me a *caballero,* and insisted on my taking his one chair while he made me a pineapple drink. Around the walls on benches sat a row of brown customers talking in Maya. At my entrance the conversation had stopped abruptly and then flowed on. I easily recognized the situation. This was the native community center and loafing place. As the arguments went on and opinions were aired and combatted, I recognized, despite ignorance of the language, the personnel also. Present were the Village Oracle, the Chief Argufier, the Community Humorist, the Hopeless Idiot, the Young Smart Aleck, the Village Pest, and all the familiar characters which from the founding of the American republic have gathered around the grocery stove in winter and the drugstore fountain in summer. Their dark skins, their sombreros, their bare, horny feet, their Mayan speech, disguised them for but an instant.

They were quite willing to give me some new Maya words for the pocket dictionary I had been gradually compiling; and all of us were edified to discover that there were at least three Maya words which were all but identical with English in sound

and meaning. These were *hol,* hole; *hun,* one, and *luum,* loam or earth. The grizzled Oracle, aloof at first, gradually shouldered his way into the conversation and made me several long speeches of exegesis and explanation of which I understood scarcely a word.

No reference was made to my detention, but at Doña Margarita's later they had heard of it; and though, when I came

*Surprised Turtle*

for supper, I was politely received, there was a constraint in the air, and neighbors who dropped in merely stared at me without offering to start a conversation. Remarks were exchanged in a low tone, as if there had been a death in the community, and when I came away I heard, when passing a group of unknowns in the darkness, the word *espía,* spy, used for the first time.

I was thankful I was in a community inhabited by tranquil Mayas, and not by a volatile and excitable people like white Nordics, who are so easily worked into a mob frenzy by the word "spy"; otherwise my night alone in an unprotected hut would have been uncomfortable. As it was, however, sleep in my hammock was disturbed only by the advent of a norther which made the air too chilly for uninterrupted repose. In the tropics I was soon to learn that protection against heat is important, but not less so is protection against cold.

The next morning I rose early and walked up the coral beach to a clump of bushes where I undressed and enjoyed a vivifying plunge into the frothy, apple-green surf. While I was dressing, a trio of Maya maidens came up a nearby path, walked into the water, and began to bathe. They did not doff their clothing but kept on a white cotton shift, probably worn as a protection against the already blistering sun rather than as a concession to the careful.

In Yucatan, as in other parts of Mexico, it is common to come upon parties of native ladies bathing without a shift or anything else on but sunlight. In the presence of males they neither scream nor leap for cover, but merely turn their backs, if that. The brown bodies of the younger women, often of several different tones, are usually full, strong, and *esbelto,* this last being a toothsome Spanish word meaning neat and shaped. Brown skins impart no suggestion of nudity, but in hot climates strike a harmonious sexless chord with sun, air, and soil. Mexican Indians have to use their bodies too much to concern themselves with concealment, and in a land where all the members of a family must frequently live, eat, sleep, and

die in a single hut, there is no room for any self-consciousness regarding lack of clothing, nor any ignorance regarding the oddities of the human anatomy.

On returning to the village center I could see nothing of the celador, nor was anyone else in sight except lines of women bearing ollas of water which they dipped up from a spring at the salty Gulf's edge.

One can bear being held in durance, but not being forgotten. I went to the local shop, bought paper and pencil, and composed a series of telegrams to a number of high officials in Yucatan and Mexico proper, protesting against my detention. These I took to the shopkeeper and asked him to read them with a view to the correction of my faulty Spanish. He pronounced them excellent, which they were not, and asked me when I was going to dispatch the telegrams.

"At once," I said. I then went out to the beach, stretched myself under the cool lee of a schooner under repair, and went to sleep. I had supposed that my movements were unobserved, but no doubt some watchful eye was upon me all the time, for in half an hour a boy crawled under the boat, shook me, and said the celador desired my presence.

The celador was waiting for me at my hut. This time he was not so blustering as before. He was still *borrachito,* a little drunk, but he was no longer the dark villain in an imagined melodrama. As soon as the villagers saw that something new was impending in regard to the gringo, they all came flying and in a second the celador and I were rimmed with a circle of brown faces whose owners were eager not to miss anything.

The celador opened his discourse conciliatingly, and said if I would destroy all my films, the incident would be closed and I would be released. I replied that the films were harmless and I would not consider destroying them. In that case, he said, he would be compelled to send me to the Jefe Commandante under escort. Nothing, I answered, would suit me better, only let it be at once. Unfortunately, he said, he could not send me to Progreso that day because no boats were sailing; but he was willing to release me under parole if I would promise on my word of honor as a caballero to report at once to the Jefe Commandante and let him destroy my films. My reply was that I would willingly report myself to the Jefe, but not to have my films destroyed; I would, however, surrender the films, request a receipt for them, and appeal the case to the Federal authorities at Mexico City.

That was not the point, said the celador, drawing himself up. The point was, would I give him my word as a caballero that I would go to Progreso, take the celador's report with me, and let the Jefe decide the case?

Yes, I would cheerfully do that, I said; but there must be no proviso about destroying my films.

"Then you will go to Progreso?"

"Certainly."

"That is sufficient," said the celador, looking around to judge of the effect on the crowd. "Give me your hand as a caballero."

We shook hands.

"You are now released," he said. "This is my report to the Jefe. I rely upon you to deliver it as promised."

"Have no fear," I said, darting for my bags, for already I

saw across the little white-hot plaza the mule-car about to start for Temax, the nearest railroad station. The spectators dispersed slowly, the small boys with particular reluctance, for they, like small boys elsewhere, would no doubt have been better pleased with a shooting.

As I ran for the car, an Indian youth in a stiff straw hat, tan shoes, florid tie and other excessively modern attire ran up beside me, insisted on carrying half my bags, cleared a seat for me, and ordered the driver to hold the car until my baggage was stowed away.

"I will see you safely to Merida," he said, seating himself beside me and ordering an Indian woman to take a bundle of chickens out from under my feet. "Don't think any more about that celador. He is a bad character. He is not a Yucateco anyhow."

## VII

Just before the mule-car departed, Loretto came up to say good-bye and to present a parting gift of a handful of *conchas perlas,* tiny grey sea-shells bearing a high natural polish, which had been gathered, he said, by himself and his small daughter. As the car lurched through the dunes he waved his hand and turned off through a palm-shaded avenue, with a quiet gait betokening an entire absence of hurry and with the very set of his back indicating an infinity of leisure.

Leisure: this is the North American white man's lost heritage. Having lost the taste for and uses of it himself, he

abuses the Indian's persistent clinging to that which to the Indian mind is no doubt a natural right. " Yucatan," said a *haciendado* to me as we sipped a fruit drink on the veranda of his big plantation house, " will never be a great country until we teach the Indian to work hard and regularly. If he won't learn, we will *make* him work."

A visitor's guess would be that the Mexican Indian will die first, just as his copper-skinned brother north of the Rio Grande has retreated and died. It happens, however, that in Mexico the Indian is not weak, except in a political sense. In numbers and in a certain racial obstinacy, he is strong. In Mexico the Indian is making his last great stand. This stand is in behalf of values which to his mind are essential to a satisfying life. Among these values is leisure. For the sake of leisure the Indian endures poverty, discomfort, insanitation and the thieving and oppression of politicians and military men. Leisure, to him, is the smooth, broad margin which makes the page of his life worth while. Its printed lines may represent privation, but a spacious margin atones for all.

## VIII

In Progreso the next day. Seaporty, fruity smells. People keep to the shady side of the street. Wake up an Indian barber and ask for a shave. He leans me far back in an American chair with nickeled levels. On the wall scores of pictures of naked women, including North American

movie dames. Taste of barbers same everywhere. Back to civilization.

To the Jefe Commandante's office at the custom house. Tall, thickly-built man with heavy-lidded eyes standing in door with one arm extended against jamb. Other arm gone. Probably an officer in the Revolution. Too dark for a Maya. More likely an Aztec.

"Want to see the Jefe Commandante, please." Slight bow.

"Enter and seat yourself."

Takes chair behind little table, shoots at me an inclusive glance, and looks out of the door. I tell story at length. Puzzled.

"You say you were arrested?"

"Yes, señor."

"What for?"

Thought I had made that clear. Go over it again. "Of course, that is only my side of the case. Here is the celador's report to you. Maybe he gives a different account."

He reads the report and tosses it aside. Still puzzled.

"Yes, but what did you do?"

"I am charged with taking photographs in Federal waters."

"Well, did you?"

"No, I took no photographs along the coast, but only among the inland ríos."

"Very well, I believe you. What is your business here with me?"

"I came to surrender the films to you."

"But I don't want them."

"Or the camera either?"

"No."

Feeling of man who comes to be executed, and finds hangman wants to go fishing.

"Then I am free to go?"

"Perfectly."

Pack up camera and films.

"A little moment. Your photographs do not in any way reflect on Mexico?"

"On the contrary."

"Very well."

"Adiós, señor."

"Adiós, señor."

Bow. Handshake. Departure.

Board a *fotingo* for ride back to Merida. Driver collects fare from me in advance so that he can buy gasoline. Only other passenger is Indian woman with restless child. A few miles out, tire pops and we draw to edge of road for repairs. Woman is frightened and draws aside her rebozo to look at me as if for reassurance. Car refuses to start again. I hold choke open while driver cranks madly. Exhausts himself and staggers against car. His torn shirt clings to him wetly. Says he has a cramp in his hand. I tell him to get in car while I crank. Miraculously, the engine starts. As we buzz off, driver explains cause of trouble at length, talking over shoulder and barely missing other cars as wheels veer. Child stands up in car, catches sight of my necktie, and pulls it loose. Mother agonized with embarrassment. I re-tie cravat, and child pulls it loose again. Engine misses strokes and finally stops. Driver gets out and tinkers, murmuring maledictions. Sun goes down. Car starts again, but lights fail to work. In sight of Merida. Ap-

proach guardhouse. Indian policeman runs out, aims rifle, and calls halt.

"What do you mean, running without lights?"

Driver explains.

"You can't go into Merida without lights. Get out and fix them."

Driver tries, but shakes head hopelessly. I ask policeman: "How far is it to Merida?"

"Half a league."

I get out and walk. At city gate brown soldier stares as I come up. He thinks he ought to stop me and bid me explain, but can't make up his mind, and I walk on past him into the suburbs of Merida under one of those moons which incite guitars to serenades.

## X

## *A NIGHT AT SEA WITH SHARK FISHERMEN*

A half-day's ride from Merida brought us to Campeche, a town which has not changed its Spanish character since it was founded nearly four hundred years ago. We travelled in a train half of which consisted of freight cars bearing Mayan soldiers who were going to play the Campechanos a game of baseball, a sport to which the inhabitants of the Yucatan peninsula have become as passionately addicted as the white fanatics of the States. The soldiers were accompanied by their women, who rode on top of the cars and there cooked dinners for their lords in tiny charcoal braziers.

To visit Campeche is to step back into Old Spain of the sixteenth century. The city walls are medieval, stoutly bastioned and fortified, and in some places eight feet thick, as a protection against the pirates who used to come over on raiding excursions from the Spanish Main. Though the people are largely of Maya blood, they prefer to speak Spanish rather than their own language, and even the women dress in Spanish rather than Indian style. We saw the mantilla worn here for the first time.

The chief hotel, the Cuauhtemoc, is itself an old Spanish antique, with a flowery *patio* surrounded by heavy bulbous

columns, wide arches, and crooked hand-hewn beams. Particularly distinguished are Campeche's central plaza, affording a vista of fine molded arches in every direction, and the Alameda studded with flor de Mayo trees humming with shoals of iridescent humming-birds. As we walked through this beautiful promenade I recalled a humming-bird lover who once boasted he had seen no less than eight at one time, and I regretted that I could not send him to the Alameda of Campeche where there could not have been less than a thousand in sight at one time. There were so many of them that the combined flittering of their wings produced a hum that could be heard a hundred yards away.

Even older and quainter than Campeche, however, is the neighboring seaport village of Lerma, where we went to see the turtle-fishermen returning from voyages to distant islands. We reached the beach just in time to see three Indians landing a turtle about four feet long, whose great shell, wonderfully marked and stream-lined, was spotted with barnacles and crustaceans. It was a female, and she yielded several pails full of eggs and a great heap of steaks. We had a turtle lunch of soup and flesh at a price which would have made the epicures of Europe and North America blink with unbelief. This region used to be noted for its exports of "*campeachy,*" or log-wood, but now its Indian workers concern themselves chiefly with *carey,* or shell, which they manufacture cunningly into necklaces, bracelets, rings, cuff buttons, and so on. To carve up this turtle and detach her shell took almost a whole morning, while ravens, hogs, and zopilotes on the beach and minnows in the water scuffled for the remains which the Indians threw away.

These minnows which silver the edge of the beach by billions are called *sucitas,* and make a delicious dish, being far more flavorous than the whitebait of commerce. We watched two Indian women wade out into the water to catch them in their aprons. It seemed impossible that such elusive objects could be caught in this fashion, but so dense were the shoals and so dextrous the women, that we saw two pails filled in a few minutes.

On rambling through the streets of the drowsy village, lined with blue coral houses, we discovered files of brown Rebeccas visiting the well, bearing great red jars. These jars, we found, were peculiar to the district. In other parts of Mexico waterjars are called *ollas,* but here they are called *cantaros.* They have a wide bell mouth and are pointed at the lower end. Due to their peculiar shape, they are carried balanced on one hip, with an arm thrown around the curving mouth. We tried to sketch these maidens as they walked past on small, delicate bare feet, but on seeing what we were doing, they broke and ran like antelopes. We finally ran down one of them and followed her into a cantina where she would have screamed her head off, had not we induced the buxom proprietress to soothe her while we made a picture.

The more we examined these cantaros, the more we were taken with their beauty of design and color, and after much questioning of timid passersby, we located the potter, who was described as the master artist of the town. We found him at work at the rear door of his straw hut — a low, squat Indian of perhaps fifty years with a thin, Chinese-looking beard, bandy-legs, and enormous great toes projecting from his unusually small feet. We asked his permission to enter, which

*Gallery around Patio of Old Inn at Campeche*

he gave with scarcely an upward glance. He was bent over his work with an absorption and intentness for which we envied him.

His potter's wheel lay flat upon the ground. It was a round block of wood a few inches across, which turned with an al-

*Native from Woods of Campeche*

ternating pressure of his heels and toes. The toes sustained the burden of the work, which accounted for their curious development. At his right hand stood a tall cylinder of wet clay. From this he scraped long strips which he rolled between

his hands and carefully laid on the top of the round wall he was building, kneading the clay with his fingers and pressing the joined edges flat with oblong, curved pieces of gourd. Four of these gourd scrapers were the only tools he used besides his wheel.

His eye was perfection, his skill a treat to behold. While we looked on he started jars of several different sizes, in every case the walls curving outward and then inward as if the obedient clay had a will of its own. It was evident that with his mind's eye the potter saw the design as a whole before he began, and the form simply flowed out of the ends of his fingers.

We had never seen a man so perfectly joined to his work. The very material was the color of his own skin, and the shuttle-like movement of his heels and toes alternated in a perfect rhythm with his rapid hands. We sat for hours and watched him without speaking. His wife, a large billowing woman twice his size, came in and offered some polite remarks regarding the heat of the day, and then she too became silent. She squatted down beside a clay plate resting on three stones, and patiently baked tortillas until she had three stacks of them each six inches high. She finally remarked that if we wished to see the kiln where the jars were fired, it lay up the hill at the end of the path through the backyard. We found the kiln in charge of two smiling brown youths who were working in front of the furnace under a sun which alone was sufficient to burn one's flesh. The combined heat of the weather and the kiln was more than we could endure, but while they agreed that there was indeed *mucho calor,* they did not mind it so long as they were busy.

## II

The sight of the glittering tropical fish at Campeche's wharf and market had fired us with a desire to see how these rainbows were caught, and we now decided to seek a native who would take us out for a night of deep-sea fishing. On the beach we found an elderly Indian to whom we mentioned our desire. He motioned us to follow him and took us a half mile down the waterfront to a stone house where he said there was a man who knew all the fishermen in the port. The owner of the house appeared to be surprised by our project and doubtful as to whether two passengers could be taken on a fishing boat, because he feared we might take up room that was needed for fish. However, when we declared, somewhat grandiloquently, that we had fished in all parts of the world and did not wish to miss a night out with the famous fishermen of the Campeche coast, he was impressed; and when we assured him that we were willing to pay for our entertainment, he was quite certain an arrangement could be made. He took us far down the beach to the clean, well-furnished house of a young native whom he introduced to us as the greatest shark fisherman of the town. This champion was a small dark Indian with an alert, intelligent face, who spoke Spanish to us very slowly and distinctly as if we were deaf. He was amused at our request, but agreed to take us out with himself and his brother the next afternoon at four o'clock.

We sailed from the beach in front of the fisherman's house with a strong northeast wind twisting our vessel's nose. Our

*The Night Storm off Campeche*

cayuco was considerably longer, heavier, and newer than the Marrufos' boat, and our skipper was well pleased with our compliments upon her trim and stout build. Our sails and rigging were almost new, too, for which we were glad, since it was evident there was going to be a blow. In the north hung a cloud that promised trouble. In nautical tales such clouds are usually described as no bigger than a man's hand, but this was at least as big as a barrel, and already it was rumbling like one being rolled down a hollow stair.

" We shall have some water," we remarked to our captain bold, having learned that in sailing Mexican seas, one does not refer to rain as rain but as *agua,* water.

" No," he said. " It is too early in the season. We won't have water till next month."

We pointed to the cloud, which was now as big as the cayuco with all sails spread.

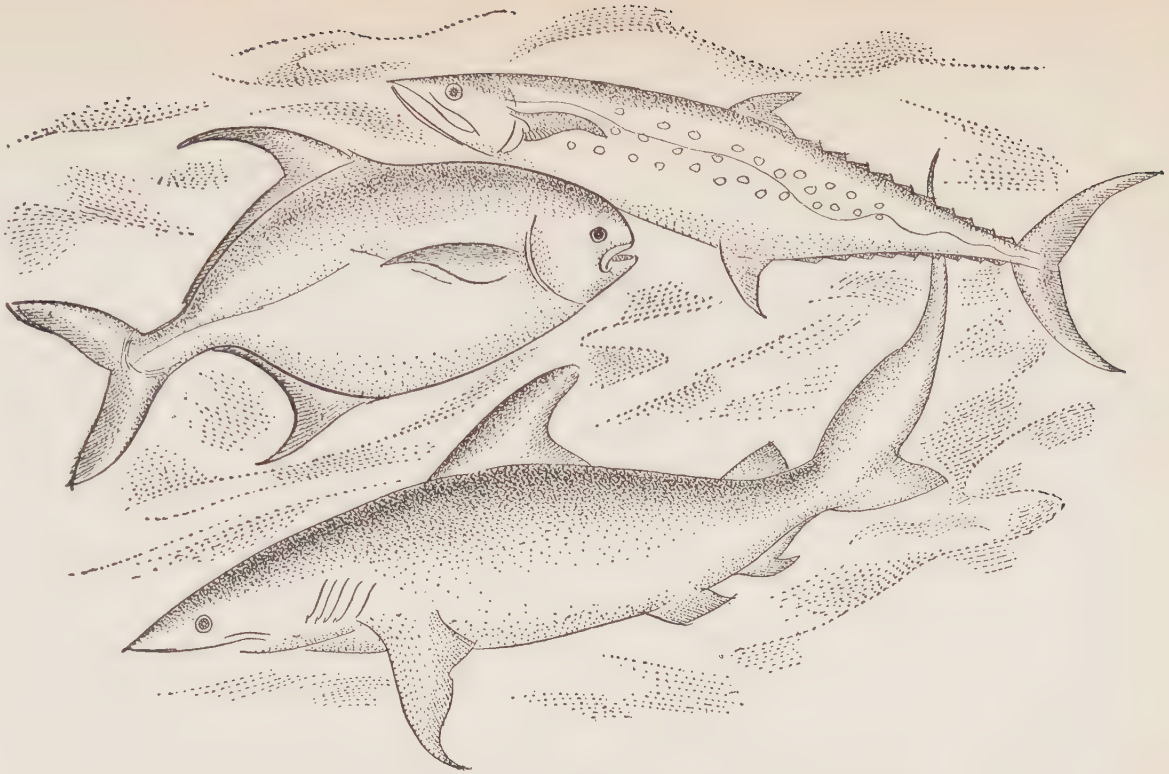
" That is nothing. It will pass."

In a few minutes the white towers of receding Campeche were erased by a grey smudge edged with black, and then the squall smote us. The spray came aboard so blindingly that we pulled up a spare sail for a shelter. Campeche disappeared behind a black curtain ripped by stilettos of lightning. The skipper may have been right in saying the rainy season was not yet due, but water was certainly falling behind us — by the ton. However, passengers are not privileged to quarrel with captains, and so we said nothing and got drenched quietly and respectfully. In time, however, the storm withdrew inland behind the magenta sierras which screened off Champoton, another ancient Maya city, leaving us to dip among the crested rollers that tried to pitch our trotting Indians overboard. They

were weaving back and forth paying out a buoyed net, and must have been hurled into the whitecaps a score of times had not their bare feet, with toes that spread astonishingly, clung to the little decks like vacuum cups.

We asked our crew to make the first haul before it became too dark to see. They said the water was too rough for good luck, but consented. Our catch included twenty-seven dogfish three and four feet long and several hammer-headed sharks. Cazón, as dogfish are called, make a dish the very sniff of which is irresistible to Mayas, and our Indians chortled as they counted them. There were also a number of smaller mackerel-like fish called cierras, but only two pompano: that toothsome fish beloved on every shore washed by the Gulf of Mexico. Dogfish are not the most comfortable companions for an all-night sail over the heaving Gulf. They have eyes that roll like a human being's, and hammer-headed sharks, which wear their eyes on the outer edge of their flattened heads, have an expression of weary resignation, as if to say: "Well, what next?" When you have thirty-odd pairs of dogfish and shark eyes all concentrated on you at once, you are pleased that you were not reared to be a deep-sea fisherman.

It was now black night. After the nets had been emptied and put out again, the skipper announced we would have coffee and a bite of supper. This was uplifting news, for the spray was still flying and the wind blowing cold. It seemed impossible that a fire could be lighted in the teeth of the whistling gale, but our Indians showed us how easily an apparent disadvantage could be turned into an asset. The dried fiber of a shredded cocoanut husk was lighted with a match and a piece of elongated charcoal pressed into the smoulder and held aloft. The



*Fish from Campeche; Dogfish, Pompano, and Cierra*

wind fanned it into a blaze which was dropped into a brazier made from a gasoline tin. The coffee pot was then put on and was quickly steaming over a glowing fire which spun a tail of sparks out far behind us. Cold tortillas and beans were served with the coffee, and *pan dulce* followed as dessert.

Unfortunately a secondary squall chose that moment to hurtle down upon us. We had to drop our sails and skim the white-caps under bare poles while the little vessel, dragging at her weight of nets, yawed, slid into troughs, and tried to stand on her rudder. A clatter of rain fell, and then a flare of lightning and a spate of bolts opened the very heavens. We ran a pole down the center of the boat across the seats and over this drew canvas to contrive a kind of A-shaped shelter. Under this we crawled and stretched ourselves while the rain volleyed on our roof as if it would cut it into holes. One member of our party was then far from well, while the other no longer felt cheerful. We blamed it on the coffee, which was a trifle thick and sweetish, and since it was impossible to fish, braced ourselves against the thwarts and slept thinly.

We were awakened by yells and stamping feet. A big steamship, whose lights made her bow appear to be as high as a skyscraper and as sharp as a cleaver, was bearing down upon us with the seeming determination of cutting us in two. At the moment when hope was as dead as our cargo of dogfish, she veered and passed us to starboard, her wash slapping us with giant hands.

This crisis having been overcome, the elements decided to permit us to live a while longer, and a period of relative calm ensued during which we resumed our fishing. Only hardy specimens like the dogfish were venturing out on a night like

this, and we caught them until our hold was heavy and slithering with them. The dogfish habit of hunting in packs — whence their name — makes it possible to catch them in great numbers. Their flesh is rather coarse, but when boiled a long time in the Maya fashion, is fairly palatable.

Tropical storms usually die away as suddenly as they arise, but this one had more lives than a cat, portions of it repeatedly

*Hills and Streams Fall into Willow Patterns*

returning to give our little cayuco another wrestle. The clouds hung so low as to make their bolts appear to explode in our very faces, and the thunder rolled itself around in convulsions that made even the waters tremble. Our two fishermen, what with heaving anchors and nets and fighting storms, finally be-

came thoroughly tired out, and slept silently in the bow and stern, sitting with their heads resting on their knees.

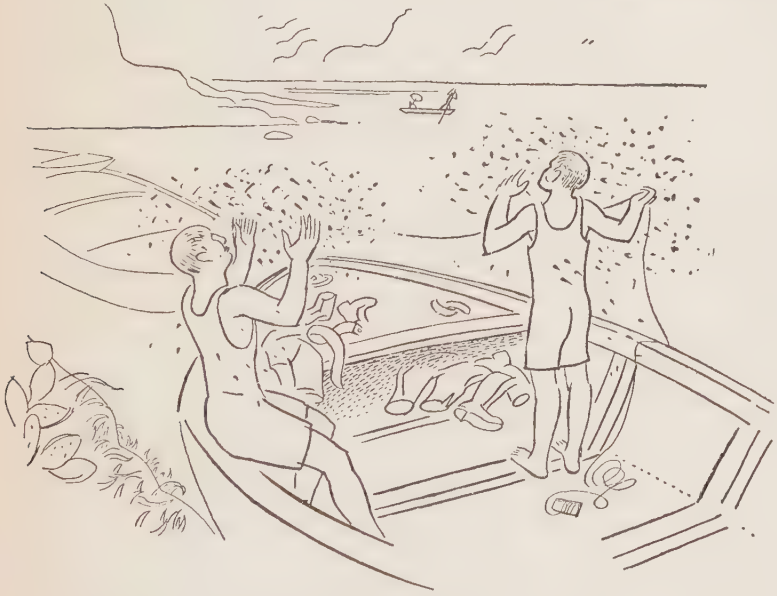
It was two hours before daylight when the last of the storm battalions withdrew, leaving our boat to rise and fall on long, rhythmic swells. Clusters of stars came out and the tropic sky snapped back into its accustomed position, infinitely high. We were surprised that so many of the stars were red, and then as the first pink and lemon beams of daylight caught the tops of the waves, we saw that these were not stars at all, but the lights of other fishing boats. Some twenty cayucos were in sight, some at anchor and others with their foresails up and their noses pointed homeward. A few passed us at close range, and in reply to our skipper's hail as to what luck they had had, shook their heads mournfully and swept their hands around to indicate that there had been too much wind and water.

It is astonishing how much the human spirit is uplifted by the knowledge that one has had companions in misfortune. We had vaguely supposed ourselves to have been alone on the stormy deep and to have been the special victims of a malign fate, but as soon as we saw brown faces that had been made a shade lighter by a sleepless night and learned that their catch had been no better than ours, the day seemed brighter and our two Indians even raised their voices in a morning song as they hauled up the anchor and raised a sail.

The other cayucos seemed moved to raise anchor at about the same time, and we found ourselves the center of a long curved line of fishing boats, all sailing abreast like racing yachts, with their bellied sails drying fast beneath a blistering sun. Since it is the early fisherman who catches the early customer, we joined

our Indians in hauling up every inch of canvas and had the satisfaction of beating our nearest neighbors to the wharf at Campeche.

Here stood a chaffering multitude, all on dogfish bent, and most of our catch was sold before we had uncoiled our cramped legs. Several boats had preceded us and their owners were cleaning their fish at the water's edge, while dogs, buzzards,



*The Insects that Lay Eggs in One's Ear*

and crows fought over the offal, being surpassed in eagerness only by the scavenger fish who were making riot in the red-stained surf. We paid our hosts for the entertainment and received their apologies for their failure to provide us with a quiet night on the bosom of the Gulf. They still insisted that the rainy season was not due until *Junio,* June, and they could not understand how the elements had made such a slip.

We reached our hotel in time to have a breakfast which might have been called broadly international, for present were a Guatemalan, a German, a French doctor, a Spaniard, and two Yucatecos. All of them, with the exception of the French doctor, were traveling salesmen, and in the midst of our formal bows we did not suspect how well we should come to know them.

## XI

## *BY CANOA ALONG THE GULF*

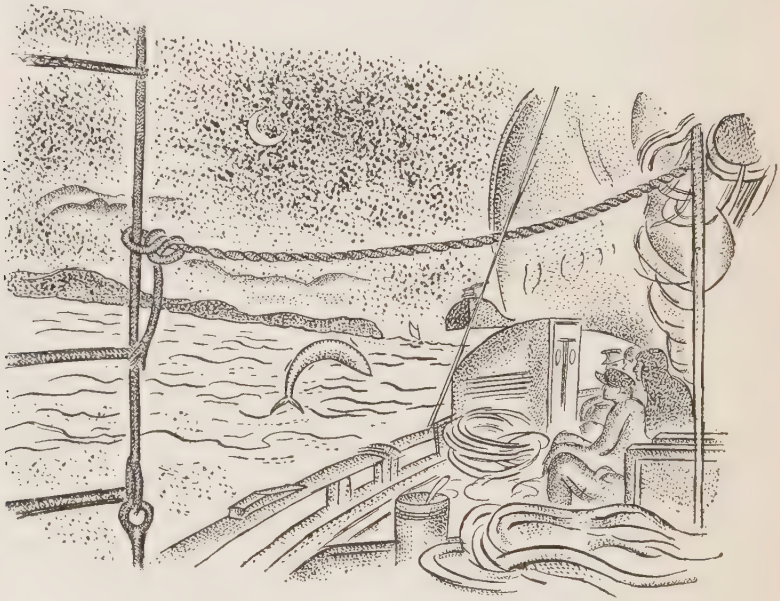
THERE being no rail communication between the Yucatecan peninsula and the rest of Mexico, travel is made possible by *canoas,* which skirt the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico all the way between the island of Cozumel, which lies off the east coast of Yucatan, to Vera Cruz, a distance of nearly a thousand miles. These canoas are really motor-engined schooners carrying auxiliary sails, and by close crowding can transport some twenty passengers and a fair cargo.

It was on a government-owned canoa that we embarked for the island of Carmen. We were the first passengers aboard, and hung over her rail for an hour in a heat that baked the quay sides. Boats lay a hundred yards out from shore, as the waters of Campeche harbors are too shallow for vessels of even moderate draught. Soon, however, rowboats put out from the wharf and on deck scrambled most of our companions at breakfast. Some of them found part of their baggage missing, and frightful discussions were held with boatmen and porters. The German alone was serene. He knotted a handkerchief around his head to keep off the sun and quietly stretched himself on top of a raised deck where he gradually turned a lobster red.

He fell into conversation with a fellow passenger and in reply to a question as to the nature of his business, proudly answered:

" Botones (buttons)! "

The Guatemalan was selling notions, the Spaniard was selling drugs for an American concern, and the two Yucatecans were selling fabrics and toys. We could recognize by their ex-

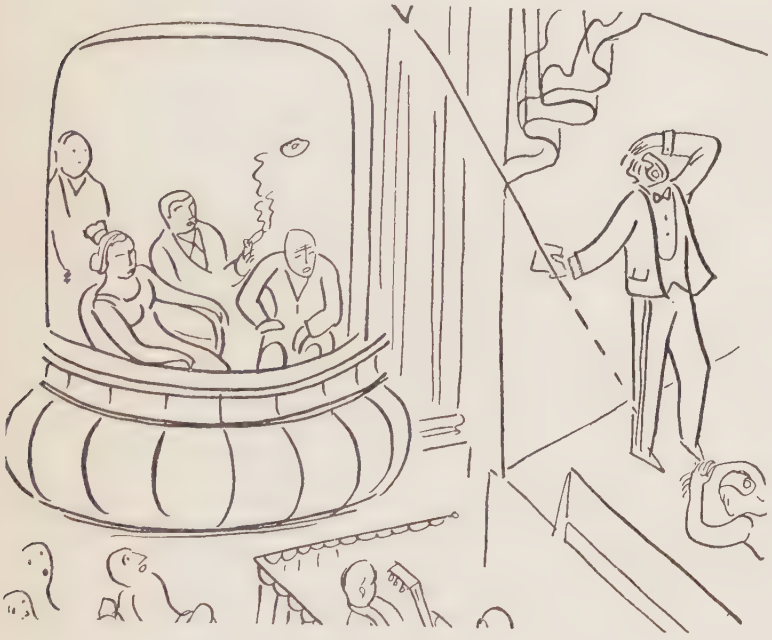


*Huge Fish Boards Our Ship*

pressions that they considered it odd that we alone were not selling something.

Our decks were already crowded with salesmen and natives when a large rowboat pulled up and emptied into us a squad of Indian soldiers under a white-clad officer. Our captain now came aboard and was about to give the order to raise anchor when the soldiers, who had been crowding the rails and anxiously studying the shore, raised a clamor. In a moment another

boat put out from the wharf, at sight of which the soldiers discharged a large sigh of relief. The reason was soon apparent. The boat contained their wives, the *soldaderas,* without whom no Mexican military detachment would think of budging a step, for the simple reason that these women are not only wives



*Fashion at the Theatre in Carmen*

but are the Mexican army's commissary department. Each lady bore a brazier, a *metate,* and a bag of food, meekly accepted a scolding for being late, and at once set up her utensils on the main deck. Each cooked supper for her own particular lord. The last person to board the ship was the cook, a taciturn old Indian who placed his stove against the mainmast and jealously shooed the soldaderas away whenever they trespassed on his territory.

No sooner had we set sail, shortly before sunset, than the dark green waters became alive with jumping and skipping fish. During the night one of them, a large cierra or mackerel, alighted on board with a tremendous thump, startling all sleepers and arousing the cook, who calmly picked him up, cleaned him, and served him for breakfast. This created an opportunity for numerous jokes. The cook was asked if his

*Gypsy Family Installed on the Canoa*

reputation was so great that fish were eager to jump into his frying pan; if he trained the fish to jump aboard so as to save himself the trouble of catching them; and what magic he used to entice fat mackerel from their beds at night when other people had to go to the trouble of pursuing them with nets.

After a supper of fish, we all tried to find a vacant spot on which to compose ourselves for sleep. This was difficult, as in

addition to a cargo of salesmen, soldiers, and military wives, our decks were overrun with dogs, ducks, and chickens. I at last got off to sleep between a soldadera on one side and a

*The Old Gypsy Queen*

salesman on the other. The night was peaceful, our slumber being interrupted only by the coming aboard of the big fish, as described, and the occasional stumbling of deckhands across our

prostrate bodies. We were wakened by a young rooster who managed to get his head through a hole in his sack large enough to give free scope to his dawn-song. The next to show signs of life were the soldiers' wives, who had their masters' breakfasts to get. One young woman, however, was sleepy and showed no disposition to emerge from the blanket rolled around her head. Her husband called her several times, and when she failed to answer, he first tickled her, and then rolled her up plumply in her blanket and spanked her.

## II

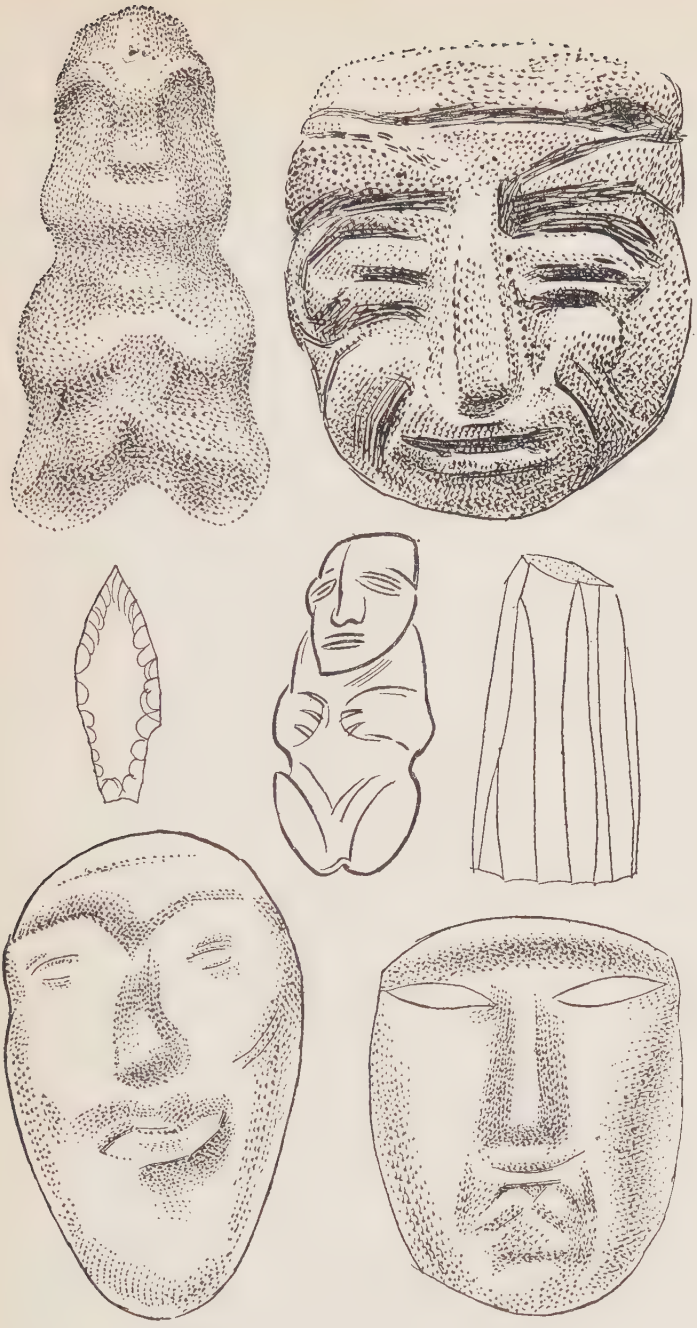
We now found ourselves passing through a series of low, densely wooded islands and before noon reached the town which the natives call Laguna, but which is officially known as Ciudad del Carmen, situated on the island of Carmen, which cuts off the sweet-water lagoon known as Laguna de Terminos from the salty bay of Campeche. We landed on a coralline beach piled high with logwood and dyewood and thickly shaded with laurel and poinciana.

The City of Carmen is another town where the Spanish stamp is still strong. The people are chiefly mestizos, and show few Indian traits. The men are mostly tall and swarthy, and are given to wide peaked grey sombreros. The women have exchanged the rebozo for the Spanish high comb and embroidered shawl. During the day, the little town, whose red and yellow houses are clean and well-kept, lies and bakes quietly under a terrific sun, but as soon as the sun falls in the

*Gate to Wharf at Frontera*

afternoon, it wakes to sudden, joyful life, one-half the population swarming into the motion-picture theatre and the other into the Teatro Carmelita, a beautiful little structure with arching colonnades and a cool, neat interior. We saw Bernstein's " The Thief " given here by a travelling Spanish repertoire company before an audience which was as well dressed and as sophisticated in appearance as if it were in Madrid. During the intermissions the beaux of the town seized the opportunity to exchange a few words with their lady-loves, since such occasions are virtually the only ones on which a meeting is possible except at the nocturnal barred window. In Carmen, too, the serenader finds the moonlit nights propitious and many a shadow shelters a swain " playing the bear," as long-range courtship is described in Mexico.

Nights at Carmen are also distinguished for their displays of stars. The great lagoon, with its wide beaches, provides a clear space from which to watch for the meteors that in the tropics are so much more numerous than in northern skies, due to the attraction of the earth at the spinning rim whose belt is the equator. We sat on the beach for an hour one night watching meteors compete in glory with bursts of heat lightning which took the shape of balls of orange fire. The Milky Way was almost as white as a field of snow, and so limpid was the air that the double star in the center of the Dipper handle could be seen, clear and large, with the naked eye, although in the North, except in mountain atmospheres, the second star of this binary usually requires a glass. We were also told that from this island Indians had been able to see at least two of Jupiter's nine moons with the naked eye.



*Relics of Aboriginal Mexicans*

III

The little flowered plaza in front of the yellow and red cathedral is electrically lighted and is dense with bootblacks, a curious circumstance in a land where nine-tenths of the population goes barefoot. The town not being large enough to support a good restaurant, we dined at a stand in the market-place kept by two mestiza women, who cooked and served our

*Warning River Villages of Boat's Approach*

meals with the gracious air of grandes dames. Their most frequent customer was the Chief of Police, with whom we sat for meal after meal, exchanging affable conversation through the smoke of puros, the long, black, softly-rolled native cigars

of excellent quality, of which a handful can be bought for a few centavos.

The chief was fond of talking about his travels, and it was to him that we first broached our project to cross southern Mexico from the Atlantic to the Pacific over the Sierra Madre mountains below the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. We had been advised against this trip, on account of the danger from bandits and the roughness of the country, but the Chief assured us it could be done, and helped us to choose a route by which we would ascend various rivers until the mountains were reached, and would then resort to horses, mules or burros until the Pan-American Railway could be attained where it skirted the Pacific shore.

## XII

## *WE JOIN THE GYPSIES*

ON a sparkling morning and a deliciously cool one, we left the island of Carmen and boarded a native canoa bound for the port of Frontera, eighty-one miles farther along the southern coast of the Gulf. We had a final breakfast with our rotund Indian dames in the market-place, who prepared for us two extra large and foaming beakers of chocolate each. To Mexico, by the way, we owe not only the beverage but the word itself. Both Mayas and Aztecs lay claim to the derivation. The old Aztec word was *chocolatl,* but in Yucatan it is declared that the original name was *choco-wah,* whose literal meeting in Maya is " hot water." At any rate, it is certain that there is no chocolate drink on earth comparable to that prepared by Mexican women directly from the bean crushed in wooden beakers and flavored delicately with a dash of cinnamon and sometimes vanilla.

Before we boarded the canoa, we had to take part in a curious comedy on the wharf. Our bags had been brought from our lodgings to the platform, but here our two porters refused, despite our entreaties, to place the bags on the boat. They explained that the men of a separate union would attend to this and demanded that they be paid before the other union would

touch our belongings. The wharf-side porters stood around our baggage in a solemn circle until their brethren had been paid off, when they lifted our bags and carried them a distance of six feet to the deck of the canoa. They refused, however, to put our things in the little hold or even to move them to the rear deck, saying this was the business of the boatmen. So we had to pay three different sets of unionists to transport our baggage a total distance of one hundred yards. However, the sums asked were small and, remembering how grievously the humble Indian has been put upon in other days, we felt inclined to congratulate them upon having found a way to protect themselves, even though their system was at times irksome and even a little comic.

We found that our captain was a barefooted Indian with a drooping walrus mustache and a patient, harassed expression. Most of the passengers were mestiza women who became seasick the moment the little boat encountered a few frolicsome waves, but on the rear deck we found, comfortably planted in shaded places, our companions from Campeche — the Spaniard, the Guatemalan, the German button manufacturer, and the two Yucatecos. They too were going to Frontera and cheerfully announcing that the canoa was low in the water, added that they doubted whether we should get there.

In an hour we entered the river Palisada, wide and bronze-colored and sprinkled with green islands over which soared pelicans, cormorants, white-headed gulls, scarlet-winged blackbirds, and red and white butterflies. We soon left the salt water for *aguas dulces,* the sweet streams which signified that we had left arid Campeche behind and were now entering

Tobasco. Almost at once the grey soil of the peninsula behind us gave place to rich red earth, the *chac luum* of the Mayas. From the high lush banks of the river sprang dense groves of mangoes, bananas, rubber trees, and cocoanut palms. The corn grew high and healthy, waving immense yellow tassels in the dazzling sunlight. Here was a luxuriant tropical garden and in its intense color more like a stage curtain than an actuality.

As soon as our little motor had settled down to a contented hum, the captain came back to apportion us our canvas-backed chairs in which we were to sit, and sleep if we could, until we should reach Frontera the next morning. I found myself seated by a tall, dark brown young woman, a Mexican Brunhilde, who, after tiring of gazing over the side of the boat, turned and offered me a mango, indicating that she would welcome a little conversation. She remarked that she was a Tabasquena, on her way home from a visit to Merida. I mentioned that I too had recently been in Merida.

"You stayed at a hotel?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, and named it.

"What was the number of your room?"

"Number 5."

"Mine was number 4!" she said, adding the equivalent of "Did you ever?" in Spanish. That seemed to be a sufficient basis for friendship, and she readily accepted a cigarette in return for her mango. She spat candidly over the side of the boat, lighted the cigarette, blew a huge cloud of smoke, and returned my own cigarette, from which she had taken a light, with a polite twirl so as to present the mouthpiece first. She announced that we would soon be entering a region where biting flies were very bad. "There is one now," and she slapped

her large, muscular leg with a report that startled the gentlemen in the rear.

Almost at the same instant a male passenger at the end of our aisle clapped his hand to his mouth and declared he had been bitten by a devil of a *mosca*. His lower lip swelled until it was as large as his chin and continued to puff up to balloon-like dimensions. Since he was clearly in pain, we got out our first-aid case and gave him a salve for which he returned profuse thanks.

All day we threaded the river, occasionally stopping to take on and discharge mail-bags at villages, most of which were grouped around churches painted a bright blue. At one stop we accidentally dropped in the water some bread, from the lunch just supplied by the cook with his inevitable brazier abutting the rear deck. Instantly the water was lashed by the tails of furious red-breasted fish which leaped over each others' backs in ravenous pursuit of every crumb.

The afternoon fled with surprising speed, and a blue and red sunset came to radiate its shafts from behind a magnificent leaden grey curtain of rain in the distance.

After nightfall, our deck-lights had to be turned out repeatedly to avoid attracting the clouds of insects that hung about each globe, to the annoyance of some of our passengers who were trying to read. The button manufacturer had his nose in a red-backed volume entitled "The Rights of the Strong," the taller of the two Yucatecos was reading a history of Yucatan, while the younger one was deep in a book dealing with American imperialism. The last-named suddenly caught my eye and came over to show me a passage in the book which declared that the United States meant to establish a hegemony

over the Caribbean Sea, and wanted to know what I thought about it. He also demanded that I go back and inform all North Americans that the Latin peoples of the South were unanimously behind General Sandino, then fighting American marines in Nicaragua. Other passengers gathered around to hear the discussion that ensued relative to the possibility of the Americanization of all the countries between Texas and Panama. The discussion was silenced only when a great moon arose. In the magic presence of this light, which divided the landscape into vast areas of blue and black and seemed to draw out the latent fragrance of the soft nocturnal air, it was no longer possible to dwell on the malefactions of nations, and we climbed up on the top of the boat the better to see the nose of the canoa pushing its way into a moonlit vegetation that grew constantly higher and denser.

We reached Frontera at three o'clock in the morning, being put ashore in a mist which all but obscured the low flat houses of the town. We groped our way up a slope and found ourselves in the center of a little plaza where lay a ragged Indian asleep on a bench. Since we had lost our sense of direction, we awakened him and hired him to guide us to a hotel. He brought us to a tightly locked door which under our hammering returned cavernous echoes until a wrinkled crone, cross and suspicious, admitted us and gave us beds whose springs of thong were covered only with a petate, the reed mat which though not thick is always cool.

## II

Frontera is the port for the fertile fruit, chicle, and lumber regions of Tobasco, Chiapas, and northern Guatemala, but on the next day the heat was so withering we felt little inclination to remain in it, deciding to continue our trip by taking the same canoa up the rivers Usamascinta and Grijalva to Villa Hermosa, also known as San Juan Bautista, capital of Tobasco.

We reboarded our canoa in the afternoon, finding most of our fellow-passengers of the day before already there, with several other souls added. There was no longer any room to stretch our legs and considerable disputation was going on about the disposal of our seats, when a rumor was passed around that our captain was going clean off his head because he had been ordered to find room for sixteen additional passengers. The unhappy skipper was running madly back and forth between the boat and the wharf when there appeared on the slope a brightly colored line of people moving down upon us. They were gypsies, sixteen of them, accompanied by barking dogs and enthusiastic small boys. Those who were not carrying babies and little dogs were bearing large round bundles of blankets and quilts. Dust mounted from their feet and sweat dripped from their faces. Marching with a rhythmic stride, they came down to the gang-plank. This was immense luck; our boat was going to be a gypsy one. But at the edge of the gang-plank our captain threw up an imperious hand and ordered the procession to halt. He said he could not take

another person aboard, and that the gypsies must await another canoa.

The storm that then broke was more sulphurous than any of the furious ones with which we had been drenched in the harbor of Campeche. An angry bellow arose from the men and a wailing cry from the women. The dogs barked and the urchins shouted with delight. The captain remained firm, and the gypsies put down their bundles while the air was split with argument. The gypsy men, all with Stetson sombreros that made them look like so many grey toad-stools, crowded around the skipper with shaking fists and faces black with indignation, while the women sat down on their bundles with an aloof expression indicating that this was strictly a masculine affair and one in which women had no business. After making a final pronouncement, the captain tried to withdraw on the ground that he had other business, but the gypsies caught at his hanging shirt-tail, following him about until he threw his arms into the air despairingly and said he would take them aboard on one condition — they must ride on the roof.

It is not likely that the prospect of riding on the roof of our canoa held any terrors for the gypsies; at any rate the hubbub gradually died, torn pieces of language settled down to the ground like feathers, and taking up their bundles, dogs, and babies, the whole sixteen filed on board, and dropping their things on our deck, sat down to mop their faces.

The patriarchs of the tribe were two elderly, mahogany-faced gentlemen with bluish-grey Dundreary side-whiskers and a demeanor of intense but slightly wounded dignity. They wore, besides their broad-brimmed hats, clean white linen and well-

cut clothing, and maintained an attitude of partial aloofness, going to the rails of the boat and lighting huge black cigars as if they had disposed of their share of the family cares by outarguing the skipper.

Next in age to them was a heavy-featured man of about fifty years, with a hairy chest, bald head, and huge hands. He was apparently the real leader of the group, for at his frown the women stopped their squabbling and even the dogs shrank back. Just below him in rank was an athletic man of about thirty-five, tall, mustached, and darkly handsome. Two youths in their early twenties occasionally lent a hand when the women found a burden too heavy to lift. There were a small boy about eight years old, two tiny girls, and three nursing babies.

One of the nursing mothers, a woman of about thirty, with curiously refined features, was unable to control the cries of her naked infant and handed it to the handsome man while she lighted a cigar with a sigh of relief. The husband took the child with extraordinary tenderness, laid it across his knees, and gently massaged its little stomach until the child had fallen asleep. Another woman sat down to feed her infant at nature's fountain, whereupon the small boy came up and applied himself to the other breast. His mother was meantime smoking a cigar. When he had finished his repast, he calmly reached up and took the cigar from his mother's mouth, strolling off across the deck and puffing with the air of a boulevardier. His mother did not rebuke him but looked after him with smiling admiration, calling upon all to witness what a little rascal he was.

The four youngest women might have been quadruplets, not

only in appearance but in the closeness with which they adhered to each other. They moved in unison, as if joined together by some invisible band, and reminding one of an Egyptian frieze. They were as black-eyed as houris and wore a half-smile curiously like Mona Lisa's. Like the other women, they wore a jingle of jewelry, loose flowing robes of scarlet and yellow stripes, with a huipil, or jacket, of a transparent material which freely disclosed the upper part of their cream-colored bodies.

But the dominating figure of the deck was the mother, an eagle-faced old woman, with a complexion like walnut stain and a sweeping, searching pair of eyes. She perched herself upon a bundle of blankets, smoking a hooked pipe with apparent unconcern, but not missing a movement of her brood. In the carriage of her head and the hard corners of her mouth was something indescribably cynical and unbelieving, but her whole mien indicated a powerful personality. She watched the evident interest of the male passengers in her Romany daughters with a veiled amusement in which there was a kind of world-worn tolerance. We finally made bold to approach the old queen and asked permission to speak to her. This she gave with a gracious nod and asked if we spoke French. When we replied that we had been in France and could speak the language to some extent, her face relaxed and her eyes became quite warm and melting.

" Ah, that is my country! " In French she then explained that she had been born in France, and as a very young girl had gone to Spain where she had married. She gave us her family name, and remarking with a wry face that she could not read or write, urged us to tell her people, if we ever encountered any,

that she was alive and well. She had come forty years ago to Mexico where her children had been born. She was the mother of two of the men and of the four black-eyed graces.

When we remarked that we should like to drop everything and join her tribe, she took the pipe out of her mouth and laughed, saying that since we had been in France and could speak the language of her native country, we were in a sense her kindred and would be welcome.

But when we returned to our seats, we found a chill in the atmosphere and we were stared at a little hostilely. The Indian and mestiza women had drawn all the chairs as far forward as possible, and on their faces was an expression of aloof and determined respectability.

Even in an Indian land Ishmael was to remain Ishmael! There could be no communication between believers and unbelievers, no friendly interchange between the circumcised and the uncircumcised! Even the Tabasquena, who had been so simple and naïve the day before, was now a little cold, as if we had become doubtful persons. This feeling was further exhibited by the idlers who had gathered to see our boat push off. As soon as the departing signal was given they crowded to the rails, making faces and howling cat-calls at the gypsies, shouting at the women cries of derision in which there were not a few obscene expressions.

## III

This feeling of hostility was not shared by the male passengers, notably the Spaniard and the two Yucatecos, who did not try

to conceal their eagerness for a bit of conversation with the comely gypsy lasses. We ourselves addressed a few observations to the youngest of the quartet, who said her name was Carmen, that she and her sisters were about a year apart in age, and that her people had just come up the river Usamascinta from Guatemala where they had been touring the country. She spoke clearly in good Spanish, and without a trace of affectation or embarrassment.

As we proceeded up the stately Grijalva between banks thickly planted with palms and banana trees, from which flocks of yellow and green parrots arose with tinny cries, the gypsies tranquilly spread out their blankets and quilts on the deck, and it soon became evident that if anyone had to ride on the roof it would be ourselves. This indeed proved to be the case. Our deck chairs were too cramped to sit in, and as soon as the sun had begun to slant, we mounted to the roof where we could cool our faces in the breeze and see wide expanses of a magnificent country.

## IV

The gypsies monopolized the deck space so completely that it was no longer possible to pass from one end of the canoa to the other except by climbing over the rail and threading one's way along a two-inch projection which overhung the wash of the boat. When the cook called us to supper, we had to eat while standing. Upon striking a junction of currents, the canoa rocked a little and the small gypsy boy, who had been stuffing

himself on cakes and sweets, became seasick. This caused as much commotion as if a monarch had been prostrated. No doubt the youngster was an important figure, for he was the crown prince and heir apparent.

Three of the older gypsy women and two of the men hovered over the boy until he had partly recovered, when one of his sisters was unceremoniously bundled out of her seat and made to give up her nook and blanket to the sufferer. She did so without objection; it was clear that when the health and welfare of a young male were threatened, the women promptly became unimportant except as nurses. On reviving, the young man conducted himself with appropriate hauteur and commanded that he be fanned, refreshed with hot coffee, and shown other attentions in a truly imperial manner. The women flew to execute his orders, and if they were in any way slow, they instantly heard from the elders of the tribe.

Some of the passengers resented our crowded condition and went to the captain to demand that the gypsies be moved to the roof as originally agreed, but that gentleman probably had had enough of gypsy argument, for he stuck closely to his bridge and refused to come aft at all.

Soon after nightfall, however, when another glittering moon had lighted our deck, the gypsies partly made up for their monopoly of space by putting on an entertainment. Led by the younger women, they sang several popular Mexican songs in which, after a show of reluctance, the other passengers joined, for the melody was too insidious to permit of aloofness. The Romanies went through a whole repertoire of these songs and then entered upon a series which were apparently more Spanish, for the other passengers failed to follow them. After a

pause, the gypsies then began a wild chant, probably a tribal one, during which the women swayed their bodies, lifting their arms and jingling their pendant ornaments.

The old mother looked on meantime out of the corner of her eye, without altering her position on her mound of bundles and without ceasing to puff at her hooked pipe. The two whiskered elders continued to lean over the rails, gazing at the stars and lighting one puro after another.

The small boy made known his recuperation and interrupted the proceedings by announcing that he now wished to dance. A space was cleared for him, across which the youngster bounded like a rubber ball. He proved himself to be a perfect acrobat, and in his exuberance walked on his palms and threw handsprings backward while his sisters kept time by clapping their hands and singing the accompaniment. The performance was concluded by the choral rendition of " Yessir, That's My Baby! " with Spanish words fitted to the jazzy North American tune, and to this the small gypsy danced a lively Charleston.

With one accord the gypsies then began to prepare for sleep. They spread out their blankets and quilts, using bags as pillows. The men reclined on their backs, but the women turned on their sides in attitudes of a cat-like grace. All were asleep instantly, the little boy lying between his parents, each of whom circled him with an arm. The rest of us dozed when we could, with heads lolling back against the stiff panels of deck chairs. Only the cook hovering over his brazier seemed ill at ease; in all the boat there was not a foot of space left, and if he slept it would have to be standing up.

La Tabasquena, deciding to resume friendly relations, leaned

over suddenly and informed me that she knew two English words — "Mister Sweetheart," and asked what they meant in Spanish. I tried to explain, but she failed to understand. I produced a pocket dictionary and passed it over to her. She held it upside down, stared at it intently, and passed the book back with a nod indicating perfect comprehension.

We landed early the next morning before daybreak at Villa Hermosa, situated on a high red bluff overlooking the River Grijalva and known to history as the spot on which Cortes first touched Mexican soil, on March 25, 1519. Near here, too, is the site where Cortes had his severest battle with the Indians, whom he overcame only when his horsemen rode around and took them in the rear. "The Indians," wrote Bernal Diaz del Castillo, historian of the expedition, "thought the rider and the horse were the same body, as they had never seen a horse."

"When the day was over," continued Diaz, "we bound our wounds up with any cloths we had, for there was nothing else. The wounded horses we cured with grease from the dead Indians, and these were opened to get the grease from their insides." Wounded men were later treated with an ointment procured by the same method.

Here also is the place where the Indians made their submission and sent to Cortes a rich collection of peace-offerings. "All this," wrote Diaz, "was nothing in comparison with twenty women, and amongst them one very excellent woman who was called Doña Marina after she was baptized."

The twenty women were received into the church and awarded to the most valuable soldiers as mistresses. Doña Marina was at first given to a soldier, but later was taken over by Cortes himself. As not only his mistress but his interpreter

and sometimes his guide, she was destined to be recorded in history as the betrayer of her people. By the Indians she was called Malinche, which was later altered to Malintzi (sorceress).

In her honor the Tlaxcalans, who allied themselves with Cortes against the Aztecs under Montezuma, named their highest mountain Malinche, which, sometimes snow-crowned, is visible from the station of San Marcos on the Inter-Oceanic railway between Vera Cruz and Mexico City. The obloquy attached to the name of Malinche is probably undeserved. Hers was not a treacherous nature; on the contrary, it was her weakness to be, as regards Cortes, too, too faithful.

## XIII

## *BANANA LAND*

THE gypsies were the first off the boat, and their males at once went into conference, standing in a circle with heads close together. The decision, whatever it was, was quickly arrived at, and with one accord they made off into the darkness obediently followed by the women, who carried most of the heavy bundles.

The next morning we were awakened by a joyful noise. It was the sound of Indian porters at work loading or unloading the numerous river boats and barges which carry all of Tobasco's goods, for the state has no railroad. There was never a merrier crew of burden bearers. They were stoutly built young fellows, protected by a strong labor union, and their whole demeanor indicated how happily men will work when they can do it in their own way and time, and are surrounded by the conditions which they themselves are able to maintain. They sang, they shouted, they were as frisky as young goats. Most of all, they whistled. I have never seen any other town where the inhabitants whistled so universally or with such a burbling happiness. The Tobasco labor unions are gathered into a strong league, maintain roomy headquarters, conduct day and night schools for their own members, and carry on a steady propaganda in favor of prohibition.

On the very first day it was evident that we had entered a community differing in several respects from the provinces of Yucatan. The inhabitants were darker, their complexions carrying the slight tinge of copper which indicates the presence of Aztec blood, although they are largely of Maya descent. The men wear straw hats sharply turned up at the sides. These are

*Cameo Carving on Gourd, Tobasco*

known as sombreros de Jipi and are made of a native fiber. We visited one of the little shops where these sombreros are made by hand, and noticed that the stooping proprietor carried on the back of his neck the scar of a large, deep gash. Someone had tried to cut his head off with a machete but had not quite succeeded.

In Villa Hermosa, which in Spanish means beautiful town, several characteristically Mexican objects and customs were

seen for the first time. In the market-place the celebrated carved gourds of Tobasco were for sale, many of them bearing beautifully executed designs in intaglio. Here too were rows of river turtles, which customers selected as they lay wriggling on their backs, and carried home by the tail. Here also we found the azucemas, the flower with the odor of tuberose, gardenia, and jasmine combined. A few of the long, curving stems with their white blossoms will perfume a whole house for several days. Tobasco is the favorite home of the zenzontle, the bird whose luscious song is celebrated in many a Mexican ballad. We were curious to see and hear this famous bird, and found it to be no more nor less than the mocking-bird of the southern United States.

In Villa Hermosa the thermometer often ranges between 100 and 110 degrees, but the evenings are usually pleasant, especially in the plaza, where military bands supply music and young people walk up and down in long lines, the sexes keeping apart but flirting madly.

## II

In the rich, humid loam of Tobasco the banana known as roatan grows in dense plantations, and a visit to one of these creates increased respect for Nature when she is really at her best. The banana tree is a noble plant, full-hearted, proud, and gracious. It grows with an obvious delight in the mere act of growing, its broad and fleshy but flexible leaves spurting from the stems in curves of an inimitable grace. The bunch of young fruit

hangs not as Nordic urbanites see it in the shops, but upside down, that is, with the fruit pointing upward. Just before the fruit begins to mature, a leaf falls over in such a way as to shelter it and protect it from the sun, which would ripen it too fast.

The American manager of a banana firm buying fruit in the vicinity performed for our benefit an operation on a young tree which convinced us of the indomitable spirit of life-growth in the tropics. On entering a plantation, he cut down a tree about six inches in diameter. When he returned to the spot two hours later, the central core of the stump had already sprouted nearly two inches.

The structure of a banana tree is such as to bear out Goethe's contention that all plants consist simply of leaves and the extention of leaves. A stem is quite clearly a leaf which has spiralled round and round its own core, each layer full of cells flowing with healthy juices. It is easy to see that the full possibilities of the banana tree have never been exploited. Not only does it yield a fruit protected from dirt and insects by nature, but fiber and pulp out of which paper can be made, while its sap is full of useful chemical properties. The chief concerns of the plantation owner are a destructive fungus; the plants' own luxuriance, which covers the ground with outworn trunks that fall faster than they decay; and the tropical hurricanes which in an hour flatten the sturdiest groves. The rafters of every native house are hung with bunches of bananas in various stages of maturity, hence a palatable, nourishing food is always at hand.

One evening we were overtaken by darkness when returning from a trip up the river and stopped at a native house to ask

*Supper on Bananas and Eggs in Native Hut*

the occupants to sell us some food. They were all in bed, but arose to invite us inside with the utmost hospitality. They regretted they had nothing to offer us but bananas, to which we could help ourselves from the bunches that struck our heads as we entered. However, one of the women went out into the moonlight to visit her hens' nests and returned with enough eggs to supply us with an omelet which, eaten with the tiny, sweet bananas of the region, made a dish for which we sang them grateful praises.

After many times stopping at the homes of natives for food, for shelter, or simply for conversation, we could not fail to notice the Mexican Indian's friendliness, his good-nature when not frightened, and his instinctive courtesy when not corrupted by contact with towns and large populations. Even when urbanized, his rascalities are conducted with a naïveté, almost an honesty, which indicates that he becomes villainous with difficulty. The rural Indian is Adam before the fall — well-shaped in body, smooth-skinned, beautifully muscled, generous, loving to smile and to make music, delighting in his children, given to occasional bursts of activity, but with an infinite relish for doing nothing. The energy of the race is vested in the women. They toil with a kind of patiently fierce persistence. One hand may be, and usually is, grasping a child, but the other is continuously at work.

Kindly as the Indian is, he is also prone to acts of cruelty, especially to animals, regarding which he is extraordinarily callous. The streets of Villa Hermosa, like other Mexican towns, have entirely too many wretched, homeless, starving dogs, and the inhabitants, becoming tired of them, kick them out of the way with a merciless brutality.

We were talking with a sidewalk merchant one day when a crippled, diseased dog dragged himself up and looked at us with the moist eyes of suffering.

" Is that your dog? " we asked.

" Well, he hangs around here."

" In his condition, he cannot get well. He ought to be put out of misery."

*River Ferry in Tobasco*

The shopkeeper agreed. " But you see the law does not appoint anyone whose business it is to destroy such dogs. So who is there to kill him? " And he looked at us with the air of one who has propounded an insoluble riddle.

At another time we went down to the river bank to fish. Two Indian boys joined us and when they saw the strips of meat we had brought for bait, they laughed.

"You won't catch any fish with that bait."

"Well then, what do you use for bait here?"

"Bananas."

We looked skeptical, for the sportive youngsters of Tobasco are not above having a joke at a stranger's expense. Bananas for bait indeed! What respectable fish would even sniff at a banana?

"We will show you." They went off and returned with a handful of bananas which they shared with us. They also had brought their own lines, which they baited with pieces of peeled banana about two inches long. In a moment they hauled up two of the large, blue-bellied catfish called bobo. They explained that all the fish in the river ate bananas, and during the height of the shipping season so much fruit was spilled from the boats that nothing but bobo would even bother to look at a hook. In the course of the conversation we learned of many new uses for bananas; for example, when a horse is gored in a bullfight his wounds are staunched and plugged with bananas, so that he may enter the arena again.

We caught so many bobo that our friends became tired of them. One of the lads eventually caught a fish that had swallowed the hook. After a long struggle to get it out, he sought to punish the fish by tying its tail to a board which he flung back into the river, leaving the bobo helpless and certain to starve. He then looked at us for approval, with a childish but malevolent glee. It was only our black looks that made him recover the fish and free it.

One is never on safe ground, however, in condemning the acts of an alien people for seeming cruelties. Is one revolted

because they are cruelties *per se,* or because they are *unfamiliar* cruelties? One may excuse a people for their malefactions; it is their different customs which are unforgivable.

Before we left the river our companions pointed out the dainty little green lizard that walks on the water. It is a mistake to say he walks, however, for he is always running, and due to his speed and the flanges on his toes, he can cross a narrow stream without sinking. We were interested in him not only because of this accomplishment, but because we learned he was called *telok.* This is virtually the same as *tolok,* the Maya name for lizard and iguana too. It reminded us that we were still among a people of Maya blood.

## III

Villa Hermosa being the market center for a large fruit, cattle, and cocoa producing region, many charros, cowboys, were to be seen in the streets with their saddles of stamped leather, tasselled bridles, and gaily fringed blankets. From these we obtained much useful information about our proposed route over the Sierra Madre and had our meals with a number of them at a boarding house where a friendly interest was taken in our project. Our greatest difficulty was to find a way to get up the rivers to the foot of the hills, the native boats being few and irregular. This problem was solved when we were offered a passage on a fleet of banana boats which would soon ascend as far as the head of navigation. They would not sail, however, for several days. The interval we spent in trips up and down

the river; in automobile trips over the fertile countryside, which produces from two to four crops of corn yearly; and in exploring the town itself where professional scribes and cobblers sit on the sidewalks and where in some sections the air resounds with the voices of schoolchildren repeating their lessons.

The population of Tobasco is eagerly in pursuit of the education so long neglected under Porfirio Diaz, and it was pathetic to witness the anxious zeal of parents that the children should make up for the time in school which they themselves had lost. Accommodations and equipment are inadequate, but the schoolmasters are energetic and faithful, and there can be little doubt that the next generation will introduce a new Mexico to the world.

## IV

Late one afternoon we boarded a little motor-launch which was to haul five barges up the river. There were three men on the launch besides ourselves, and we interfered sadly with each other's movements, but they shared their space with us with true Mexican hospitality. We ploughed all night long up the current on a moonlit night, guarded on either side by banana plantations and patches of jungle.

The next morning we could see the great Sierras rearing their heads bluely in the distance, among them the craggy Madrigal, the foot of which we should reach sometime that night. At daybreak the banks of the river were alive with men and boys bringing down bunches of bananas on their backs

by means of a strap passing around their foreheads. They piled the bunches up like cordwood, panting and sweating in the dust and sun, their white clothing stained a leaden color by the juices.

We were called to breakfast early, and while parrots, herons and red-breasted kingfishers flew above our heads, climbed over the rear barges until we had reached the one where on a narrow ledge the cook had erected his galley of gasoline tins. It was necessary to maintain a careful balance while we stood up and ate our eggs, for every lurch and twist of the barge threatened to topple us over into the yawning hold among the chickens and turkeys tied to stanchions by their legs. The cook made coffee with water dipped from the surface of the river. We drank the coffee willingly, but felt compelled to decline the river water when gourds of it were dipped up that we might rinse our mouths after the meal.

All the hot morning we chugged through magnificent plantations and forests of mahogany and other rare woods. The straw-thatched houses of the lowlands gave place to stone and adobe houses topped with red tiles, and the cattle standing in the deep grass were round and sleek. Here and there we noticed colored posters urging *ganaderos,* cattlemen, to maintain unceasing war on the garrapata, the cattle-tick which is capable of draining a herd of its very life.

The boats used along the river banks were long, slender cayucos hewn out of the logs of Spanish cedar, with long poles widened at one end into paddles so as to supply a double propulsion. Many of these boats were navigated by women, who, as we approached, turned their backs to us, but a series of enticing whistles from the crew invariably brought their smil-

ing faces around, while the whistlers made open comments on their charms.

In the afternoon we reached the village of Tacotalpa where the crew helped us to get our baggage up the high banks and parted from us with a cheer and a wave of their hats. Here

*View from Interior of Banana Launch*

we were astonished to find awaiting us a cavalcade of fine saddle horses, provided by our kind host at Villa Hermosa, and, the air having been cooled by a recent rain, we were off on a magnificent ride along the river bank through a vast banana plantation, many of whose trees had been flattened by a hurricane two nights before. Our mozo, or guide, led us through

one beauty spot after another until we arrived at the edge of the banana farm known as the Finca La Gloria.

Here we left our horses and boarded a flat-car hitched to a tractor driven on a narrow-gauge railway by a gigantic old engineer with long grey hair. The mozo told us that if we preferred we could ride the horses all the rest of the way to the hacienda, several miles distant, but at this the old engineer raised a voluble protest, pointing out that he had even brought chairs in which we were to sit on the flat-car. He was mollified only when we assured him that we were highly appreciative of his courtesies and that we would not consider riding in by any other means than on his train.

At the gate of the hacienda yard a throng was waiting to greet us, and we were received with ceremony by the major-domo, a young man with grave, clear-cut features. A heavy rain came up while we sat on the veranda and gratefully drank the refresco which our host had had made for us and admired the magnificent dark blue mountains that completely enclosed us. These mountains were once inhabited by an aboriginal tribe of cavemen. We visited one cave which, though long disused, had yielded an earthen pot in excellent condition and of a character hitherto unknown in this region.

Darkness came with amazing abruptness, and now we saw for the first time the cochuyo, also called the locuyo, the jewelled firefly of southern Mexico which bears double lamps in its back, these being two greenish eyes or headlights that throw a double beam for several yards and enable one to read a newspaper with ease on a dark night. We experimented by enclosing one in a thick envelope in a darkened room. When

placed in a corner, the whole envelope glowed as if every fibre was luminous. We could read by it.

These huge fireflies, known to science as Elateridae, are often used by the natives to light a way through the jungle at night, and are credited with having saved the lives of lost travellers. They sometimes alight in clusters on certain trees, turning on and switching off their brilliant phosphorescence in a mysterious unison. The Indian girls often catch them and fasten them in their hair, and the sight of a black-eyed lass with such a fiery crown is calculated to astonish the most hardened traveller. Boys also imprison the insects in cages made of split cane, thus contriving lanterns which glow even when submerged in a pail of water. The luminous substance found in the double lamps of the beetle remains brilliant for some time after its owner's death. The cochuyo is quite different from the firefly of northern latitudes, the mature insect being well over an inch long and having a hard greenish-black carapace. The light comes not from the soft flesh, as is the case with the northern firefly, but only from the two round lamps or wells situated in the back immediately behind the eyes.

Here also we heard for the first time, the next morning, the Mexican chacalaca, the peculiar dark, raven-like bird which loves to gather in great choruses in the tree tops and make a pattering, chattering morning music of which its own name is a good imtiation. He is vigorous and noisy but very wild, and it is not easy to catch sight of him, for at the sound of the faintest footstep in the forest, he is off in the midst of his flock. His oft-repeated chant is given in Spanish as follows:

" Me quiero casar
" Con Balthasar.
" Me quiero casar
" Con Balthasar."

In English this chant means simply, " I want to marry Balthasar," but in Spanish it has a rhythm which persistently runs through one's head, and on the trail it was as annoyingly recurrent in one's mind as the celebrated passage which Mark Twain used to declare had well-nigh driven him loco when repeated to the click of railroad wheels:

" Punch, brothers, punch, punch with care,
" Punch in the presence of the passenjaire."

## V

Chacalacas repeating their metallic call in the nearby bushes. Wild parrots screeching overhead, answered by a tame one in the backyard. The sound of an *arroyo,* brook, foaming down a craggy slope. The smell of earth dampened by the night's rain, the smell of thick stone walls and whitewash, the smell of scarlet and orange-colored flowers, the smell of rising heat, the constant smell of bananas. The pat-pat-pat of Indian women making tortillas. The faint scrape of their feet on the cement floor. The fragrance of chocolate and cinnamon. Voices giving orders in Spanish. The stamp of horses' feet.

A new day looks in at the door of La Gloria hacienda, cool, and with its face washed clean. We breakfast early, mount, and are off down the slope to cross the river again, accompanied by the majordomo and the mozo who is to guide us to the next town, whence we will send back the horses and hire new ones to carry us over the next stage. Right through the banana rows we go, our horses stepping high over rotting trunks. The great healthy leaves, set with crystals of dew, strike us in the face wetly. Our animals have had their packs tied with care. Now at the river's edge we must unsaddle them and swim them over the river with its splashing currents. Two boatmen cross the river for us in a narrow cayuco. In a matter of fact way they gather up the horses' bridles, load the boat with our baggage, push off, and drag the horses into the river. The animals object and try to hang back, but in a moment they are swimming madly. They are held so closely together that their feet strike each other. The weaker ones are submerged and show distress, but the current ferries them obliquely across, and in a moment they are snorting on the shore. In Mexico a horse is treated with small politeness, and no consideration is shown to his finicky ways. He must go at a lope all day, climb mountains, ford streams, swim rivers, and get there. If there is corn to be had, he gets some; otherwise he must find his own grazing at night and be ready to go on the next day. He may deem his lot hard, but look how beautifully he is dressed. Where outside of Mexico does a fine horse wear so much chased leather and so many gay tassels? Remnants of those medievally Spanish days when one's mount was truly caparisoned (from the Spanish *capa,* cloak).

We replace the packs, the majordomo waves farewell, the boatmen refuse our silver, saying that all has been arranged, and we begin our journey across the Sierra Madre, not to end until we sight Pacific waters.

XIV

## *OVER THE BACKBONE OF MEXICO*

THE western Sierra Madre mountains are part of the immense continental backbone, reared in some past upheaval of the earth crust, which extends all the way from California virtually to the Isthmus of Panama and renews itself among the high cordilleras of South America. We were now among their foothills on the north. Almost as soon as we had left the clearings of La Gloria plantation the mighty vegetation enclosed us. Our road was at times only a narrow path struggling to maintain itself against billowing walls of jungle growth.

We were thankful that our Indian guide was tall and long-necked, for there were times when we could only see his head bobbing in front of us as our horses forced their way through leafy seas. There was evidence that at one time the territory over which we were passing had been under cultivation. We threaded rows of rubber and mahogany trees, and occasionally passed a deserted stone house whose tiled roof was falling in. The road led steadily upward towards sharply peaked mountains wearing necklets of mist about their throats. Below us we caught occasional yellow glimpses of the foaming river as our horses labored up steep ascents or slithered down de-

clivities coated with mud made greasy by the first downpours of the rainy season.

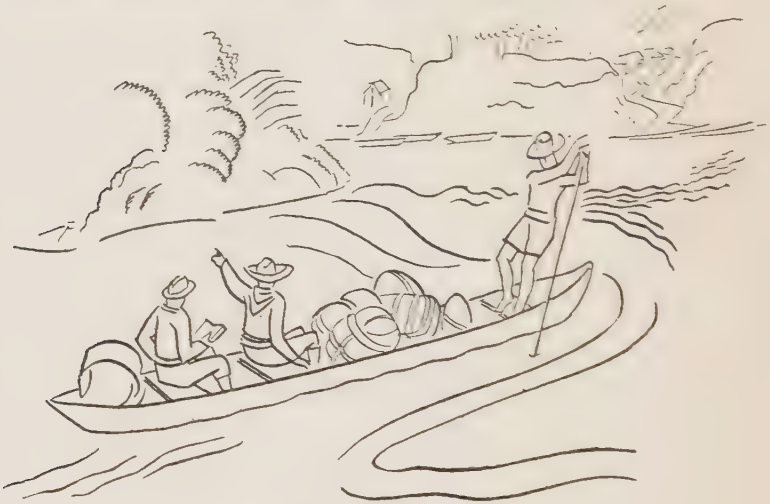
Southern Mexico being a land beloved of butterflies, we thought we had seen a sufficient variety of these flittering gems, but now we were passing through a region where they were outnumbered only by the leaves. Broad-beamed blues, reds and yellows circled about our heads, while nearer the ground the

*Swimming the Horses, Tobasco*

grasses twinkled with millions of tiny brilliant forms. Strange birds, flowers and insects were sighted in such numbers that we gave up trying to learn the names of them from our accommodating guide, who in response to our questions could only shake his head and grin.

We were apparently riding over what had once been a well-worked road, but it had lapsed into a decay marked by washouts, gullies, and boulders fallen from the peaks above. Nar-

row streams were occasionally crossed by bridges of light poles tied together with lianas and vine fibers. Our horses walked over them with trembling, suspicious legs, but their shivers were no more abundant than our own, for at any instant we expected to break through the rotting timbers. Our rear was brought up by a mule that carried our baggage. At one bridge, swaying and creaking in the wind, she balked and refused to



*Up Tobascan Rivers by Cayuco*

take it. We supposed it was because she deemed it too dangerous, but on investigating we found her heavy pack had slid over on one side. She declined to budge until her burden had been exactly balanced.

In the afternoon we reached the village of Tacijulapa, hanging by its fingernails on the side of a mountain and with its feet braced against the banks of the river Tacopalco. We had a letter to the village's one merchant, who received us hospitably, offered us drinks made of the luscious guanabana, and gave us

a room back of his shop whose windows and doors he closed so as to darken it for our siesta.

In the late afternoon we went down to the boulder-bordered river and, with bananas as bait, began to fish from the barges anchored there. The inevitable small boy came along and began to give us sage advice. The river was too full, he said, for good fishing, but we might catch a few little ones. While we were watching our lines, a cloud of winged black insects clustered about our faces, and persisted in following us whenever we changed our position. We slapped at them to no avail, and even clouds of smoke from the black cigarettes of the country failed to drive them away. The boy casually remarked that these insects laid eggs in one's ear, and that when the eggs hatched, the ear would fester, so that it would have to be cut off. Our fishing ceased then and there. Anyhow, we told ourselves, it was time for dinner, and another rain was coming up besides.

While we had been occupied down at the river bank, we had noticed among the rocks back of us an upraised head whose eyes studied us with close attention. Each time that we had shifted our position, the head had shifted too. The owner of the head now approached and with humility informed us that if we wished a guide for our journey of the next day, he was willing to accompany us at very moderate pay. He knew the country well, he said, and would take us in any direction as far as we wanted to go. He was a dark brown Indian with sleepy, slanting eyes. He spoke with an air of mingled bravado and servility. We did not like him, but asked him to see us later, as arrangements for the next day were in the hands of our host.

*Glimpses of River through the Jungle*

*Saddle Horse Slips off the Road*

On returning to the shop, we learned that the next would be a day of fiesta and that horses would be very difficult to procure. Inquiry proved this to be mournfully true, and even the exertions of our host failed to find us mounts for the morrow. A grey-haired native then informed us that horses could be had at a ranch three miles distant, and that he would go and fetch them at once if we would pay him for his trouble. We promptly commissioned him to do so, on condition that the horses be ready for us to start at daylight.

We then went to supper prepared for us in a nearby hut. It comprised meat rissoles, rice and gravy, beans and coffee, all cooked on a tiny brazier made of a gasoline tin. While we were dining, our Indian of the river bank came in and sat beside us, greeting us affably and helping himself freely to all dishes. When we arose, we found that the price of our dinner included the charge for his meal. This appeared to be a little forward, but since the extra charge was small and our Indian looked at us humbly and fearfully, we paid the sum. Our guest then escorted us back to our shop, took a seat near the door, and never took his eyes from us for the remainder of the evening. When we went for a walk in the moonlight, he fell in behind us; when we returned, he was at our heels, and when we retired, it was necessary to set the door in his ever-hoping face.

We went to bed on low wooden frames covered with several thicknesses of tanned cowhides and slept without hearing a sound. But when we awoke the next morning, we found ourselves surrounded by half a dozen brown companions who had entered during the night and found beds or hammocks for themselves. We never knew who they were or whence they came.

## XV

## *A CLIMB INTO THE CLOUDS*

AT dawn we were ready to attack the high chain before us, but outside our hut nothing was visible except our ever-present Indian, who apparently had roosted outside our door all night. When we inquired as to our horses, he informed us that the old native who was supposed to have fetched them the night before had been detained by some domestic matters, and that he had only just departed. However, the ranch was not far away, he said, and our mounts would be here in a very little moment.

We urgently wished to start before the sun rose over the mountains, but we waited an hour in vain. Another hour passed, and we had begun a despairing search for other horses, when shortly before nine o'clock, the sun being by that time high and glowing, our horses appeared. The old native explained that he had obtained them only after much entreaty, because the owner wanted them for the fiesta.

Our steeds were three thin and melancholy ponies, bearing saddles which had been worn down to their wooden frames. However, it was no time to be finicky. We piled our belongings on the baggage-horse until he sighed with resignation, and put halters on our saddle-horses when we learned that no

bridles were to be had. Our host was absent at the moment, but when he reappeared we asked him if, as promised, he had selected for us a competent guide. He replied that he understood we had already made arrangements with our mozo of the humble countenance. It would be difficult to find any other guide now, he said, because it was to be a day of fiesta.

Accepting the situation and our self-appointed guide, we started off under a sun that felt like a branding iron on the backs of our necks. At first we rode through a series of gently rising meadows sprinkled with dainty wildflowers, and then the grassy trail turned to grey rock and rose in the air abruptly. We were going straight up a mountain which from below appeared to have an inclination of not more than thirty degrees. Stones that slid and rolled under our horses' hoofs gave place to slanting boulders into which deep narrow holes had been cut to afford a footing. These holes were filled with a soft, clinging mud into which our horses sank up to their knees. We repeatedly had to dismount to enable our little animals to drag themselves out. The trail became ever steeper, and at times contracted to a ribbon only a few inches wide, upon which tumbled boulders encroached until they struck fire from our scraping stirrups. Passages between these boulders were occasionally so narrow that the horses stuck in them.

Nothing is more indifferent than the tropical sun, but if he had deigned to glance at this minute but sweating procession of three horses and three men, his broad face must have widened into a crocodile grin, for this part of the trail was blithe and easy in comparison with that which lay in wait for us in yet higher altitudes. We had not been gone an hour when

we realized with what inadequacy we were prepared for such a climb. We were physically ill-prepared for the task: we had been loafing in the hot lowlands, the seductive *tierras calientes;* lying around on boat decks; and permitting our bags to be carried by porters. Soft muscles had no place on such an iron trail. These facts did not apply of course to our Indian. While we crashed and slipped along with our heavy boots and leg-

*Swinging Bridge over a Chasm*

gings (the usual fatuous equipment of department-store explorers), our Indian, light heeled and barefooted, flitted from stone to stone like a flying squirrel. The sight was irritating; we did not like him anyhow.

But with all this, our state was good beside that of our mustangs. Their sides heaved painfully, their breath came in short, doglike pants, their nostrils distended until they were red and

wet, their knees became raw from stumbling. The baggage-horse seized every opportunity to lie flat on his belly like a camel. It was useless to remain in the saddle; we could hope to surmount the great peaks which lay blue-grey and grand around us only by tying our horses' halters around our shoulders and dragging them up by main force.

Higher and hotter waxed the sun. Directly overhead at noon, it bored through one's shirt and blistered the back. We dripped lather like our horses. Cigarettes, matches, and cardboard objects in our pockets dissolved into a pulpy mass. And then came the craving for water; we had been several hours without any, climbing grey rocks under a sun of shining zinc. We must have water! We inquired of the Indian.

" No hay," he replied, disinterestedly.

Spanish is one of the most mellifluous and sonorous of tongues. It is a Romance language in which poets have felt no lack; but it contains two of the shortest, most abrupt, and most desolate words used by humankind: " no hay," meaning *there isn't any.*

" But there must be an arroyo, a brook, along the road somewhere? "

" No hay."

" A spring, then."

" No hay."

" A rancho, or a house."

" No hay."

But he was mistaken. An hour further I spied, under a broad and gracious leaf of elephant's ear, a tiny pool three inches deep, formed by the slow seep of droplets from a crevice in the rocks. It was clean and clear, except that it contained, swim-

ming joyfully in a world of their own, about fifty black specks of tadpoles. I leaned down and contemplated them. The next instant the pool was gone, and so were the tadpoles. Behind me I thought I heard a kind of chattering laughter. It came from a gorgeous black and yellow toucan in a tree top. He was cracking seeds between the mandibles of a large and humorous beak. A toucan is all beak, with a bird glued to one end of it.

## II

The road now led through a kind of badlands, caused by the erosion of heavy rains assisted by giant landslides. It was past noon and the sun became a dazzling furnace. At this moment my horse, which I was leading by a long halter, chose, instead of following my footsteps around a smooth boulder on the edge of the trail, to step upon it. He slipped, struck fire from the rock with his shoes, pawed desperately with his forefeet, and disappeared down the side of the mountain. For part of the way I went with him, dislodging rocks which ended their flight with funereal thuds far below. The horse rolled over three times and was only saved from an almost sheer drop of perhaps a mile by landing in a clump of thorn bushes, where he lay with his heels in the air.

Our Indian came back and gazed down the mountainside with a slight show of interest.

"That horse is finished," he remarked. "We might as well kill him."

We repelled this pessimistic suggestion, and while we picked

our way down to the spot where the horse lay with his eyes rolling appealingly, directed the Indian to take out his machete and cut the horse loose from the thorns while we held the rope to keep the animal from sliding further. We showed the mozo

*Baggage Horse Wedged in Narrow Defile*

how to cut away just enough of the bush to permit the horse to free his head and feet, but he stupidly cut the entire clump away, and down rolled the horse fifty feet further. The halter had meantime slipped around the mustang's neck. We hauled

on this until we forced him to struggle to his feet to avoid being choked to death.

Then came the task of getting him up the precipice and back on the road. We accomplished that by cutting a zig-zag path. It took us three hours to drag the animal back to the road above. He was badly skinned and bruised, but fortunately no bones were broken. He permitted himself to be quietly saddled again, but on repassing the boulder on which he had slipped, he snorted at it as if it were a demon, and reared violently.

We were already winded, due to exertion and the constantly increasing altitude, but, spent as we were, we resumed the climb in the hope of finding water. During this trying period, it was interesting to observe how one's body responded to the strain. The heart pumped so violently as to interfere with one's hearing, and even developed a " knock " similar to that of a laboring automobile motor. The blood circulation, fiercely coursing through artery and vein, attained a heat which drained every cell in the body of its moisture. Tenderfeet that we were, there were moments when we felt entirely spent, but then came the " second breath." This was followed by a third breath, and then a fourth, and so on. Every new level of exertion brought out another reserve of energy. As day succeeded day of climbing, our muscles and tissues, at first so slack, gradually hardened, and all the bodily functions adjusted themselves, so that at the end of a day's march we easily kept up with the Indians who escorted us and at nightfall were no more tired than they.

## III

By five o'clock in the afternoon our animals, as well as we, were suffering severely from thirst. All day we had been without water, and food too; in our ignorance we had failed to provide ourselves with a gourd of water or a snack of food, to be used in case of emergency. However, at this moment we rounded a bend and came upon a little rancho, with a neat house near the road and a grassy grove in front of it. In this blessed grove our horses sank upon their folded legs. We left them where they lay and after repeated hammerings at the door of the hacienda, a slender youth came out and greeted us courteously. Calmer inspection might have revealed him as otherwise, but at the moment he was handsomer than Ganymede himself. He at once perceived our distress and ran to fetch us calabashes of water, which we could have engulfed whole, but which we drank sparingly until we should be less heated. The water was followed by a drink of posole. This drink, characteristically Mexican, is not only refreshing but mildly stimulating, and contains enough nourishment to enable the average peon of the farms to make his breakfast upon it. Our young host apologized because he could do no more for us, saying his mother was absent, otherwise we could have coffee and food; but in lieu of this he brought us cups of hot milk which completed the work of restoration, and after watering our avid horses, we trudged on.

The trail was now level and clear, and for the first time that day we were able to gaze about us freely and sweep our eyes

over the range of the Sierra Madre around us, lying imperial, blue, and silent under an approaching sunset which, partly hidden by distant rains, was bright silver, shot with ribs of a dovelike grey.

Before nightfall we were in the village of Amatan, seated, so to speak, on the top of the world, since the range of mountains here is the highest in the region. It is the capital of the Amatan tribe of Indians. It was Sunday, and a row of bells at the side of the little church was being rung by a man who held thin strands of twine, attached to the bells, looped around his hands, so that to make the music he barely moved his fingers.

We had letters to the brothers Ramos, ranch owners and merchants, who said they could put us up for the night, but advised us to proceed half a league further where there was a coffee plantation owned by " Don Carlos," a German. However, we were too spent to go further, so the brothers gave us an empty shop to stay in, having counters on which we might sleep. Learning that we were hungry, they sent us over with surprising quickness a hot supper wrapped in banana leaves, including delicious chicken tamales. We ate on the veranda, and from there suddenly caught sight of a spectacle of extraordinary beauty. The village lay scattered over a semicircle of rounded hilltops. On the highest one of these sat a row of girls in white, forming a crescent around a tall white cross, and singing a low chant. A beam from the falling sun, pink and blue, happened to fall upon this human crescent and, alighting upon the cross, made a picture which the religious artists of medieval times would have loved.

*Among the Sierra Madre; Approach to Amatan*

While surrounded by the usual circle of the curious, we asked a brown youth what language the people of the neighborhood spoke.

" Amatan."

" But that is the name of the village. What is the language? "

" Amatan," he repeated.

It was thus we learned that Amatan was the name of the place, Amatan the name of the tribe, and Amatan the name of their language. We also learned that the people on the next mountain spoke a different dialect, and the people of the two hills could scarcely understand each other. This condition is not uncommon in the mountains of southern Mexico.

We visited the little church and found there a row of saints carved in wood by artists who had been masters of their trade. No one knew the origin of these images, but we guessed they had been carved in Guatemala, which at one time contained the best Spanish artists known to the New World, and had probably been fetched here on the backs of Indians over many a mountainous mile.

We retired early, but slept not, due to the charges of powder fired every quarter of an hour from small iron mortars outside the church. The women meantime held a mass inside. It seemed an extraordinary noise to make during a religious service, and we could learn no reason for it except that it was " el cōstumbre " — the custom; behind which words the Mexican native prefers to hide everything for which he can give no detailed explanation to a stranger.

Priests not being permitted, the women were conducting their own service, singing in a throaty, doleful contralto which

had an antiphony of high-pitched, girlish sopranos. Meantime, " boom " went the mortars.

## IV

Why has no one written upon the beauty of tiredness? In all the world there is no sweetness approaching that enjoyed by the man who, after utterly spending himself on the day's work, can utterly rest. Herein lies one of the attractions of rough travel. Civilized peace has become a monotone, so deficient in strong contrasts of light and shade as to produce none of the vital sensations of living. All energy goes into the act of doing, and no love is left for the act of being.

But when one has become so fagged that every bodily fiber is lax and creaking, when one's head hangs low, and soreness lies like a dull fire in the veins, and one can feel the grains of dirt that have been ground into the very pores of the face, to loosen the latch of one's shoe is sublimest luxury; to dip one's baked features in cold water is to gasp for pleasure; and to lie upon one's back on a blanket spread over a wooden store-counter in a Mexican hut is balm from the heart of Gilead.

The usual bodyguard of peons crept under the shelter of the veranda and stretched themselves in a long, white row before the door, talking, smoking, and scuffling a little before they went to sleep on their backs. We all lay down together, the white man and the Indian, the wolf and the lamb.

We were a little anxious the next morning lest we find our-

selves sore or slow. But we were not; we were in better condition than we would have thought possible on the previous day; the night's long sleep had done its perfect work, and when we threw off our blankets and trotted down the mountain side to a spot where a cold stream gushed over the rocks, we found we were quite fit again.

When we returned to the top of the hill to pay off our mozo and let him take his horses back home, we found him standing in a circle of worshipful admirers. He was smoking a big black puro, and he was patronizing them. He answered their questions with the bored air of a man of the world who has travelled widely and is no longer amused. To his wage we added an extra sum for his hard if unwilling work in cutting the fallen horse out on the previous day, and left him to tell another Munchausen story to the group which hung upon his every word.

## XVI

## *AT THE CENTER OF A CONTINENT*

"GUTEN MORGEN."

It was queer to hear this German spoken on the top of the Sierra Madre. We had arrived at the Finca Escalon, less than a half hour out from Amatan, and here stood its proprietor in the middle of the road that led past the hacienda. There was something in his attitude that indicated he had been there a long time, waiting. He was a tall blond man, standing very straight in his riding clothes. He addressed us in German, but when we showed we were not fluent in that language, he switched to English, which he pronounced with the schooled carefulness of one who had learned it from a grammar rather than in conversation.

"Gentlemen, I pray you, have the kindness to leave your horses and come inside with me for coffee and cigars."

Without doubt this was "Don Carlos," the *alemán,* German, of whom we had heard much at Amatan. He was regarded as a very big man in the vicinity, being part proprietor and manager of the largest coffee plantation in these parts. We thanked him, but explained that we ought not to stop because we hoped by nightfall to reach a certain point where we were

sure of obtaining shelter from the rains that had now begun. He was disappointed.

" Gentlemen, surely you will not decline to stop with me for a little while. One has so little company here. I have hot coffee waiting. I have been expecting you all the morning. I will even give you beer, very cold. We have our own ice machine."

We agreed to stop with him for an hour. We remained there twenty-four.

## II

Before our departure from Amatan, our hosts there had not only provided us with fresh horses but had urged us to take along an armed guard. They did not hint at the presence of bandits, who we knew were scattered throughout these hills, but explained that the country was disturbed; that since we had come to them with introductions they felt responsible for us; and that they would turn over to us a young man who would see us safely through the country. We accepted their offer, and they then brought forth the armed guard.

His name was Alfredo. He was beautifully mounted on a young grey horse, richly caparisoned with a tasselled bridle, an enormous, cradle-like saddle, a gaily fringed blanket, and a multitude of colored objects hanging from his saddle-bags. What Alfredo lacked in size — he was only an inch or two above five feet — he made up for with a formidable revolver carried in a holster at his side, a belt of cartridges, a red handkerchief around his throat, and a spreading sombrero. In aspect he was very fierce, but actually he was polite and smiling,

*Nomadic Pottery Vendors*

helped us tie on our packs with practiced hands, and in other ways let us see that he was the man for the job. We liked him at once, and readily accepted his escort.

We had not finished our first round of coffee and cigars in the library of the cool hacienda when Don Carlos informed

*Part of the Church Service at Amatan*

us that he was starved for conversation and that if we left him, we would break his heart entirely. We objected that we had engaged the horses and Alfredo only for the day and must send them back that night. Don Carlos then declared that if we would remain, he himself would supply us with new mounts, would arrange matters with Alfredo, and would in addition supply us with an Indian boy to look after the horses. This generosity was not to be refused, and after Alfredo had been dismissed with instructions to meet us on the road the

next day, we contentedly resumed our chat with Don Carlos and had more coffee and cigars. We had had an ample taste of wild life the day before. Now the appurtenances of civilization — books, baths, armchairs, pictures, and sanitation — had a new enticement, and we were highly satisfied to sit down among them again. It is by means of such sharp alternations and contrasts that one becomes really aware of living.

Don Carlos was a Bremen man. He had been in Mexico many years, but had returned to Germany for service in the World War. Having had some training as an engineering draftsman, he had been employed in a department which designed submarines. He was one of the first of his countrymen to return to Mexico, where he was welcomed enthusiastically, for Germans are popular throughout Mexico, perhaps more popular than the men of any other nationality. Don Carlos, being a man of wide reading and travel, was interested in many things, but his real enthusiasm was reserved for coffee. He liked to raise it, ship it, sell it, and drink it. Coffee, he said, was one of the most interesting, delicate, and sensitive of plants. For its prosperity it requires a certain altitude and grows best among the hills. It requires not only altitude but shade, and is therefore commonly planted with other trees, notably bananas. One of its chief enemies is the leaf-cutting ant, which if not interfered with, will cut a whole plantation to pieces and carry it away to deep storehouses. The green berries, when hulled and dried, must be carefully sorted and picked over. Every berry that enters into one's morning cup of coffee has passed under the eye and fingers of a nimble Indian girl.

Don Carlos informed us that we had already left the state of Tobasco and were now in Chiapas. His finca stood almost

exactly in the center between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. His laborers had to be imported from various parts of Chiapas, as the local population was not great enough to fill his force. They easily became homesick and even the inducements of better housing, sanitary conditions, and regular earnings could not keep them long from the three stones of their own firesides.

*Rest for Lunch among the Peaks*

There was much heavy machinery about the place, and all of this had been brought on the backs of Indians and animals up the mountains on laborious paths.

We were introduced to the hero of the plantation, a middle-aged Indian who had killed a jaguar with a machete. He was on a mountain path one day when he suddenly missed the small dog that had been trotting at his heels. He looked back

and saw a large *tigre* standing across the path and glaring at him while its tail lashed the air. Beneath a forepaw was the little dog. Incensed by this impudence, and ignoring the danger of attacking a jaguar single-handed, he rushed upon the animal with his machete. So sudden and furious was his attack that the jaguar had no time to defend itself, and the Indian, with repeated blows of his slender blade, cut off his head. The dog had been unharmed. The jaguar measured nine feet from tip to tip.

We sat talking virtually the whole day, pausing only to partake of the numerous eatables and drinkables that were being continually brought in. Don Carlos rubbed his hands with obvious delight in the possession of company. When he arose occasionally to attend to some call, he begged us to remain seated, as if we might fly out of the window before his return. In this isolated region visitors were rare. Occasionally a geologist, prospecting for oil, came through, and once a Mexican army detachment, in pursuit of bandits, had suddenly appeared. The officers had remained with him several days, enjoying his beer and baths, but had done no damage.

In the late afternoon the whole western half of the sky was occupied by a panoramic sunset entirely in blue and grey. Clouds lay in the valleys below us like shining lakes and overhead a curious black arch formed itself in the heavens.

## III

The stay with Don Carlos had dissolved the last sore spot in our racked frames. We knew this the next morning when at daylight, with a new outfit of horses, we clattered down into a broad valley over a road laid with stone under careful German direction. At parting, Don Carlos stuffed our saddle-bags with food and habanero.

Our new *muchacho,* boy, was Pedro, a stout, broad-faced, merry-eyed Indian lad who led the way with a tuneful whistle. We were now clear of the badlands, and rode through valleys and hills many feet deep in a riotous verdure. Lush and pulpy plants with enormous leaves bordered the trail. From one of these Pedro broke off a stem that oozed with a fresh, clear juice which he showed us how to drink from when we needed water. Streams and springs, however, were abundant and, as a steaming heat lay in the swamps and valleys, we drank copiously from brooks of a mountain coldness and clarity.

We broke the morning's march by a short stop at a little ranch house where a mestizo family welcomed us, giving us cool posole and then hot coffee, for which they refused to accept pay. The mistress of the house, a buxom young woman dressed in a flowered cretonne, declared that it was pay enough to have someone to talk with. She was perfectly happy here, she said with a glance at her husband; but once in a while she would dearly love to see a moving picture, preferably something with Rudolph Valentino in it.

Here for the first time we saw a genuine wild boy from the

*Down the Steep Sides of the Sierra Madre*

mountains. He was a lad of about sixteen. He spoke no language except the dialect of his particular mountain. Even under the terrific sun of Chiapas, he wore no hat, his head being protected by a mass of black wiry hair that fell into his eyes. His features wore the most ferocious and forbidding expression, but he readily permitted us to look at the pouch of puma skin which he carried over one shoulder. This was filled with stones, his only weapon being a sling. We commented upon his amiability to the woman of the house, who replied:

"All the people of Chiapas are sweet. They are not like those hard people in Tobasco, who love money so. Have no fear, señores; wherever you go in Chiapas you will meet sweet people."

However, even in sweet Chiapas there are the flares of passion which have marked so many Mexican trails with red stains. We learned later in the day that a few miles to the south of us a man had been ambushed and shot. When his assailants found he was not quite dead, they finished him with his own revolver.

We now began to climb again. The road was even steeper than that on the other side of Amatan, but we were in a more fit condition now and scrambled over the crags without undue strain. The country grew ever richer and more fertile. Gorgeous orchids and other parasitic plants clung to trees whose trunks were bright red. The forests were of a soaring grandeur, often pervaded by a gloom lightened only by those ever present jewels, the butterflies of southern Mexico. As we were traversing a particularly rocky part of the trail, we heard a clatter of hoofs behind us and a young horseman, dressed in charro style, came up, spurring his horse along at full speed

even over the upward slope. Reining in alongside of us, he proffered a bottle of habanero, and then remarking that he was in a hurry, rode furiously upward and disappeared over the hill. At noon we reached the ranch of Cruz de Lencho where we found Alfredo waiting for us.

## IV

The day was oppressive, the air being thickened by the sullen approach of half a dozen thunder-heads, disclosing the red teeth of tropical lightning. We welcomed the opportunity to sit in the cool central corridor of the hacienda and make guesses as to how soon the rain would catch us. While we rested, the young horseman we had met on the trail below strolled in at the door. He said he had learned from Alfredo that we were going in his direction and asked permission to join our party. Further conversation disclosed the fact that we were bearing a letter of introduction to a Señor Martinez, of the town of Simojovel, who he announced was his father.

The woman of the house was the mother of a fine baby boy whom she placed on a blanket close by so that we could keep an eye on the youngster. In playing with the baby, we found that he was blind in both eyes. The mother explained that he had been born with a cataract over either eye. We remarked that we knew of cases where an operation for this affliction had been successful, and suggested that when the baby was older and stronger, she might be able to take him to a city in the North and have his sight restored.

She had apparently resigned herself to the belief that the child was permanently blind, and our suggestion that this might prove to be untrue filled her with delight. She immediately cooked and served us an excellent meal for which we of course expected to pay, but she refused to look at our proffered silver, saying that we had brought her a new hope which she would not permit to be desecrated by the exchange of money for hospitality. She also brought out a little memento to give us. It was a piece of conical obsidian, the glassy volcanic rock from which the ancient Mayas and Mexicans used to split their arrowheads and axes. This piece was the nucleus of a matrix from which many arrowheads had been chipped off.

In our party we now had five men and six horses, and when we started off again we made quite a procession. Our lead-horse was an old grey mare which carried the baggage, and though faithful and steady for hours at a time, she was given to sudden aberrations which caused her to wander up the by-paths made by Indians coming down from the topmost hills. In such cases Alfredo and Pedro retrieved her with volleys of stones and vituperations. Alfredo's most withering epithet was "Cabrón!" (Billygoat!), while Pedro's was "Burro!" (Donkey!).

In an hour it began to rain. The tumbled black clouds were tanks which, as soon as they arrived above our heads, opened and tried to bury us beneath hissing floods. Our light ponchos were sufficient against a shower, but beneath these cataracts they were only an aggravation. We tried to thicken our coverings by cutting the gigantic elephant's-ear leaves, some of them five feet long by two and a half feet wide, that grew along the

*Our Guides over the Mountains*

path, and tying them around our necks, but the rain quickly beat them to pieces. We found that the task of getting up a mountain was exceeded by the job of getting down it. The slopes were so precipitous that we were continually sliding down upon our horses' heads, grabbing at their ears to save ourselves from a plunge into the slithering mud.

*Farewell to Don Carlos*

Before the afternoon was over, we learned that Alfredo and Pedro were going to be companions no less cheering and capable than the good Mayas of our Robinson Crusoe isle on the Yucatan coast. They accepted the rains laughingly, whistling and yodelling, as rivulets ran off our ears and filled our boots. The strains and bumps of travel were continu-

ally unsettling our horses' packs, necessitating repeated adjustments, and though repairs were made with a rattling fire of expletives, such bursts of rage were invariably followed by broad grins and shouts of "Arriba! Arriba!" (Up! Up!).

Six times that afternoon we were dried off by an emerging sun and drenched again by a new uprush of clouds. We passed no houses and no human beings, except occasional files of Indian burden-bearers who glanced at us impassively from under the straps which crossed their foreheads and removed their hats humbly with a "Buenas tardes, señor."

At nightfall we reached the rancho of Pedro Luis. It was plain that the hacienda had once been a center of considerable activity. The stables were numerous, the main building was of the solidest construction, and in an outhouse stood an old wine-press. But now the house was deserted, and we marched into its main room, partly lined with aromatic woods, and took possession with no one to say us nay. How good, how penetratingly good, it was to strip off our soggy clothes and exchange them for dry garments, which in this case were old pajamas.

From Indian huts nearby we obtained ears of corn for our horses, and their inhabitants came over to sit in a row on a veranda and help us shell it. Our horses, which had been stripped of their saddles and allowed to graze, heard the sound of rasping corn cobs from afar, and pricking their ears, thundered down upon us like schoolboys released from confinement, and stood in a hungry row, whickering and biting each other with impatience.

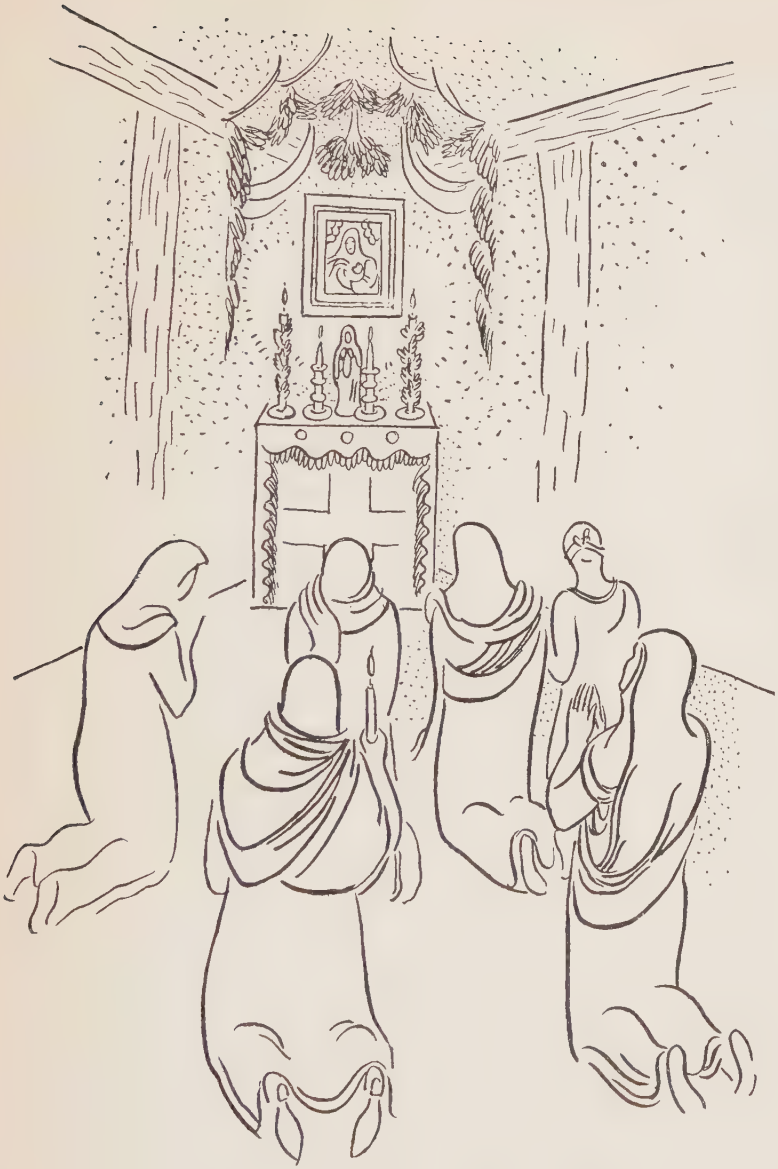
As soon as the corn was spread out for them to eat, we saw

a new wonder. From Cruz de Lencho a black and tan dog had followed us at a distance and then disappeared. He now came up, nosed his way among the horses, and ate the corn with them, cracking the hard grains with his strong white teeth. However, in a land where fish grow fat on bananas, we saw no reason why a dog should not eat corn like a horse.

We made a fire in the patio and cooked a supper of eggs and black beans. While we were smoking after-dinner cigarettes in a dry luxurious peace, two other travellers rode into the yard, greeted us affably, and strung their hammocks beside ours in the main room.

The clouds rode off upon a warm wind and the cleansed stars popped out. From one of the Indian huts came the sound of a weird music, plaintive, repetitious and Oriental. The thin piping of a flute was almost drowned by the swell of throbbing drums, so majestic as to make the breast contract with a kind of awe, and even in its perfect rhythm having a wildness that aroused the blood like a savage stimulant.

Pedro informed us that the hut was an *iglesia,* church, and that the music was religious. We went to investigate and found sitting against the walls, in a shadowy darkness illuminated only by a few candles on a tinselled altar, a man and a half dozen boys. Their long hair hung over their eyes. At our entrance the music stopped abruptly but was resumed at our request. The flute was played by the man. It had three stops, two above and one on the under side. The drums were like the tunkuls of the Mayas, made of wood and skin and played by the hands. Two of the boys were urchins of not more than eight years, but they played the instruments with the same sureness of



*Women Still Worship at "Bootleg" Altars*

rhythm as their elders, their dark eyes glittering in the candlelight. The priest having disappeared from Mexico, there is no longer a leader for religious services; hence in the remote villages of the south the natives conduct masses to the accompaniment of untamed music derived, no doubt, from the most primitive times.

It was to the throb of these drums that we went to bed, a simple operation requiring only the tossing of a rope over the rafters, knotting it at the two ends of one's saddle-hammock, and removing one's boots. The two strangers were already swaying in their own hammocks, their blankets drawn up over their heads, so we all swung together in the darkness, the ropes creaking in unison against the ceiling beams of fragrant cedar. The drums rolled on, changing their beat at intervals, and then ceasing with an abruptness that left an eerie emptiness hanging in the air, as if space itself had withdrawn from the world and fled to other planets.

## V

Morning coffee is always good, but nowhere does it cross the palate with more gratefulness than in Mexican mountains, where its customary burnt taste adds its own crown to luxury. We had ours in the cold dawn while our horses, in answer to a whistle, came down from their grazing among the clouds and competed with pigs, dogs, turkeys, and chickens. We had to be in the saddle betimes in order to reach Simojovel that night and be sheltered from certain rain.

Our trail led for the first time through large groves of pines and other conifers; and the swamps, as prolific as ever in orchids, contained large clusters of sweet-gum trees, whose scented sap is used by the Indians to perfume the resins burned in the churches as incense. For the first time, too, we encountered snakes. There were two of them, one a small coral snake whose head had been freshly smashed, probably by Indian porters who had passed us while it was still dark. The other was an enormous reptile, which we guessed to be a boa constrictor, that rushed into the bushes before we saw it clearly. Estimates of its length ranged between eight and twenty feet, and Pedro was sure that its head was as big as his own.

We were descending from the highest peaks of the Sierra Madre now, and the road, which formerly seemed possessed of the spirit of a demon, became gradually tamer and at times led us along the smooth, grassy banks of streams in which we bathed red-hot bodies with luxurious abandon. In the afternoon the usual thunder-gusts loomed above the mountain tops and precipitated themselves upon us, rushing ahead and then waiting so as to give us a second drenching.

We were still wet when we rode into Simojovel, a clean, neat town resting on a plateau surrounded by valleys where the corn was twice a man's height. The town, though fairly large, contained no hotel, nor even a hotelito, and it was only after considerable search that we found lodgings at one end of the place and at the other a house where they would prepare us a meal. At the latter the women asked for the money in advance, and then sent out an *Indita,* little Indian girl no bigger than the green corn she brought back, to shop for us.

While we sat in the dining room, which opened upon the street, we had an opportunity to witness a comedy of Mexican courting.

Though she was supposed to be setting the table, the youngest daughter worked mostly on the side nearest the door, against the jamb of which she occasionally leaned as if contemplating the sunset, receiving there the salutations of passersby. The first suitor who stopped was a somewhat elderly man who addressed a few words to her after he had effusively greeted all the other persons present, including ourselves. The señorita showed a polite interest in his pleasantries, but no enthusiasm.

He was succeeded by a middle-aged man who plainly had the support of the young lady's family, for they all came to the door to exchange a " buenas tardes " with him and comment on the abundance of agua, water. Possibly this was the rich suitor; he was better dressed than the elderly man and carried himself as if he regarded deference as his due. After the exchange of polite commonplaces, the family carefully withdrew, leaving the señorita alone with her stout swain.

In a moment a tall young man walked rapidly by the house, but halted when he saw the lady, as if in surprise. He also made a few comments about the weather, to which the señorita replied at such length as gradually to draw the young man into a triangular conversation. The triangle did not persist very long. Instead, it became a duet from which the stout man was by imperceptible steps frozen out, and he finally gave up the contest, making his exit with a rather terse adiós to those persons in sight.

The young Romeo now held the field, but he was careful not to make himself conspicuous. He stood to one side of the door-jamb so as partly to screen himself from the view of those

*Wool Huipil with Geometric Pattern, Chiapas*

within. The mother and elder sister left their cooking long enough to come to the door for an instant. They bestowed the barest greeting on the young man, but the glances of hostility and defiance that passed between the older women and

the younger one told their own story — probably one of the very oldest in the world.

With our dinner we had abundant music, this coming from the little plaza around the corner where a huge marimba was being played by five men, accompanied by a clarinettist. The marimba consists of wooden keys struck by wooden hammers over large sound-boxes built beneath. It comes from Guatemala, where its sound-boxes were originally made of gourds. A marimba stands in the plaza of virtually every town in eastern Chiapas and any Indian appears able to play it, music and a certain ability in the plastic arts seeming to lie at the end of every native finger. The two most popular melodies were " Las Quatros Milpas " (The Four Cornfields), and " Rio Rita," which at the time was a favorite musical comedy song in New York.

The plaza was decorated as if for a fiesta, and we learned that one was due the next day. We heard this news with foreboding, suspecting that it might mean we should have trouble in finding fresh horses for the next stage of our journey. We indeed found this to be the case, and after vainly interviewing several horse owners, we prevailed on Alfredo and Pedro to remain with us for another day. We disliked the thought of parting with them anyway, for we had learned to like them both even better than we had anticipated, and it was with real relief that we won their consent to escort us to the next town of Bochil.

The surrounding country being full of cattle, we were not surprised, on going to bed, to find ourselves bearing several garrapatas, the cattle-ticks of which we had been warned because of their dangerous bites and their supposed capacity

for fever germs. A native boy showed us how to remove them without leaving a wound, and since we had brought along a preparation to treat such bites, we anticipated no evil results.

## XVII

## *GUESTS OF A MEXICAN VILLAGE*

BOCHIL being eleven leagues from Simojovel, we would have to ride hard to reach the former town by nightfall, and we were off early on the same mounts through a wonderfully beautiful country containing vegetation very tropical on the one hand, with orchids and hibiscus glowing in the moist valleys, and more like the temperate zone on the other, the hills being covered with familiar looking pines and hardwood and the roadsides thick with blackberry bushes.

As we proceeded, our one mule, which had been carrying part of the baggage, became restive and repeatedly planted himself at right-angles across the trail, with his forefeet up a slope, as if in an endeavor to throw the weight of his load on his hindquarters. Several times we adjusted his pack, but he became more troublesome than ever, even cries of "Macho!" (Male one!) and beatings about the head failing to make any impression. At length he developed a limp in a forefoot, and we were compelled to halt at a village to attend to him. This was the pueblo of San Juan. As we halted in the little plaza, the mayor, a tall, middle-aged man with humorous blue eyes and streaked red whiskers, came out to greet us. On learning

that we should have to shoe the mule, he remarked that it was a day of much heat, that a big storm was coming up, and that we were ill-advised to go farther. If we would remain, he said he would open the city hall and place it at our disposal.

*The Charro who Joined Us in Chiapas*

Since the storm did seem to be the most threatening that we had yet seen and promised to become a hurricane, we accepted his invitation and dismounted at the city hall while our two

guides went in search of a shoe that would fit the macho's foot. The cabildo was a low stone structure of two rooms, with a wooden veranda and a red tiled roof. In the middle of the plaza was a large round boulder, worn smooth by much sitting, on which rested a dozen Indians of a type different from any we had previously seen. Their bodies were short and slender, and very muscular. In color they were dark brown, with large noses and projecting mouths. They wore only two garments — a short jacket which did little more than cover their shoulders, and trousers rolled up high on their thighs. Each was smoking a long black puro with an appearance of the sublimest comfort and disinclination to move. They showed interest in our arrival, but did not take the trouble to come closer. When I pointed a small camera at them, an exclamation of horror ran round the group, and they broke and fled like so many brown hares.

A little later we had lunch at a nearby hut kept by a comely woman who had a small daughter, a lovely child of about five years. I asked the mother's permission to make a picture. This she gave, but when I aimed the camera, the child gave a piercing scream and burst into hysterics, with wails that aroused the entire community. The mother vainly tried to soothe her, but even the promise of *dulces,* sweets, failed to interest the screaming child, and I gave it up.

The fear of the camera could be ascribed to the belief in the " evil eye," which is still prevalent among the primitive tribes of Mexico, but it was difficult to account for the extraordinary timidity of the population in other respects. We took a short walk through the village, comprising about twenty huts around which men, women, and chil-

dren were busy at various occupations, but at our approach they vanished like wild rabbits down a hole, and a peer into their doorways disclosed nothing but darkness and silence.

On the edge of the village the poles of a new hut had been erected and a thatch of grass bundles was just being put on. About fifteen men and youths were at work happily, but when they spied us the whites of their eyes showed large with fear and any sudden movement would have sent them all running. However, after we had stood quietly by for several moments, they decided we were harmless and resumed their work. The rafters of the hut were occupied by the older men, who with strips of fiber tied on the grass bundles tossed to them by the young men on the ground.

Here, after their fear of us had passed entirely, we saw one of the pleasantest phases of communal life in Mexico. Though the house was to be occupied by one individual or family, the work was being done by all the neighbors, each of whom had no doubt enjoyed in the past this form of communal assistance. They were making a picnic of the whole affair, talking and laughing with obvious happiness. They not only exchanged verbal jokes, doubtless at each other's expense, but played practical ones, tossing the bundles about, hitting each other in the face with them, and engaging in pushing contests during which one or more of them fell through the light covering to the ground. Such comedies caused shouts of laughter.

Cornfields are planted by the same method. All the neighbors gather on a certain day and in a long line they march across the field, making holes in the ground with a pointed stick and

dropping in the grains, which they cover with a stamp of their bare heels as they pass over. This too is done to the accompaniment of conversation and laughter.

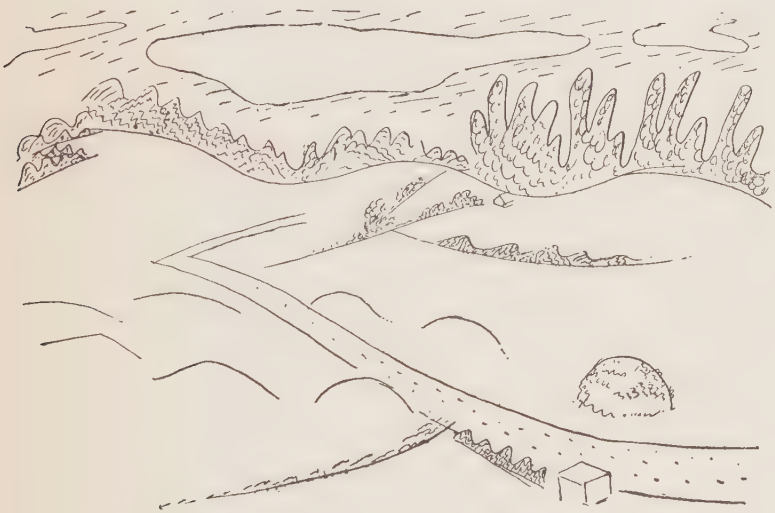
To see the Mexican Indian at such communistic tasks is to realize how completely he has nullified the old Biblical curse bestowed on man in respect to his labor, and how unnecessary is the grim, forbidding silence in which the Nordic white man earns his daily bread. By arousing the communal spirit the Mexican Indian no longer performs work as toil but converts it into play.

And then comes the industrialist and by persuasion or compulsion, takes the docile brown man away from this joyful labor and its spacious solidarity and herds him into gloomy masses, regimented, ticketed, and silenced. Indeed, the curse of industrialism is not its introduction of the machine, with its creation of the uniform man as well as the uniform product, so much as it is its taking from men the right to be happy and talkative at their work. Its effects on the Indian of Mexico, the son of uncircumscribed time and space, are depicted with a terrible power in the frescoes of the Mexican painters Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco on the walls of two public buildings in Mexico City.

We had an immediate illustration of the tendency of the local native to work in his own way and in his own time. On the veranda of the cabildo we had seen, upon our arrival, an Indian industriously at work making a ball of heavy twine. In the bend of his knee, he held between calf and thigh a bunch of fibers, from which he plucked selected strands and twisted them into a string by rolling them on his bare thigh. The leg had been worn smooth of hair through this process. He made

another string by rolling the fibers in the opposite direction. When he united the two strings they twisted themselves together by natural tension, making a thick, strong twine, of which he apparently had about a mile and intended to make a mile more.

His neighbors of the sitting-down boulder had meantime returned to their post and, the camera being absent, had relighted their puros. With the mayor as interpreter we ap-



*Ancient Mounds from Heights at Bochil*

proached and asked if one or more of them would guide us through the nearby forests, where we had learned there was much jaguar and *tigrillo*. They took the matter under advisement while they puffed their smokes [in the United States these would have cost fifty cents each]. At length one turned to his neighbor and said, " You go." The latter passed the word on to a companion: " You go." And so it went, all around the

circle, with no one budging. The consequence was that we got no hunting that day. The man on the veranda continued his second mile of twine.

## II

Alfredo and Pedro had meantime returned with a mule shoe. It was too small for the macho's foot, but that gave them little concern. They simply cut the hoof down to the size of the shoe. Their method of fastening the shoe we found to be the same as that followed generally in the primitive regions of Mexico. They drove in a nail as far as it would go and if the animal reared, that was a sign the nail had touched the quick. It was then withdrawn and driven in again. If the mule did not rear, all was well.

By this time it was too late to resume the road, and we made arrangements to sleep in that room of the cabildo usually reserved for travellers. While we were so engaged, a nomadic family of pottery-sellers arrived and, seeing the cabildo occupied, contented themselves with camping on the ground in front. They lighted a fire on the grass and cooked meat and tortillas which they shared with their numerous dogs. Sly pigs nosed their way among them and occasionally snatched a piece of food from a child. The women then gave a signal for the dogs to clear away the pigs, which they did to a bedlam of squeals.

A billygoat came up and enthusiastically joined the dogs in the chase. A large sow refused to give ground and kept the dogs at bay with her vicious teeth, but the goat routed her by butting

her furiously in the rear, each butt being followed by a pronounced "Oof!" from the sow. She eventually checkmated the goat by lying flat on the ground in such a position that the goat's head could not reach her, but she was forced to retreat when the dogs ran up in turn and chewed her tail.

*Indians Help Us Shell Corn*

After their meal, the campers spread out their wares on the veranda and waited for trade. Their pottery was of a salmon color, beautifully shaped, but very fragile. Among their offerings were hair combs cut by hand out of mahogany.

These pottery-sellers were apparently natives, but they were distinguished from the local Indians by their unusual hairiness. The Indian of southern and southeastern Mexico is usually smooth of skin, and even the beards of the old men are sparse and straggling, but the arms of these women were hairy from

shoulder to finger-tip and the backs of their hands were virtually furred.

The village occupying a magnificent situation in a bowl rimmed with violet mountains, the sunset was correspondingly gorgeous, the red rays converting the stony crags and escarpments into pillars of fire. For dinner we had deliciously cooked chicken tamales sent to us from a nearby hut, and a few centavos bought enough pineapples to supply us all, their texture and flavor being incomparably sweeter and more delicate than the fibrous article sold in the markets of the North.

At bedtime we slung our hammocks across one end of the veranda while the nomads disputed the other with dogs and pigs. In the middle of the night a group of porters came up, unstrapped their burdens at our end of the veranda, lighted puros, and began an animated conversation in their own language. Some of them, judging by the laughter, told funny stories; these were invariably related in a high falsetto voice markedly different from the conversational tone. They might have remained talking until daylight, had we not driven them away by rising from our hammocks in the clear moonlight and glaring at them fiercely.

## III

We were up before dawn the next morning, but could not make our intended early start because we found our horses gone. At night it was usual to release them to graze at will, they always responding to a whistle when the corn was ready the

next morning. But now, probably enticed by plentiful verdure, they had wandered off among the hills, and it was two hours before we rounded them up.

We at once began climbing a series of hills so steep that we were compelled to dismount and use our hands as well as our toes to get over the precipices, but the country was far smoother, in general, than any we had yet traversed. We re-

*The Happy Thatchers at San Juan*

peatedly passed through stately hardwood groves over gravel paths so level and springy that we preferred to walk and thus get the stiffness out of our limbs. Ranches, most of them having wide fields of sugar-cane and crowned with neat, well-kept haciendas, became much more numerous. We stopped at several for water and were always hospitably welcomed.

At one house where we received a refreshing drink of posole

with cane-sugar, the only occupants were two women, a señorita of about seventeen and her mother, who looked scarcely older. These two ladies were so attractive that we asked permission to photograph them, but they declined, saying they were very busy and were not dressed, etc. While we rested on the veranda they disappeared into the interior of the house. We remained until we were thoroughly cooled and then remounted. At a bend in the road we happened to look back. Standing in the door, looking disconsolate, were the mother and daughter, dressed in their Sunday best.

Despite what they had said, they were probably pining to have their pictures taken, and without intimation to us, had secretly changed their costumes, emerging just when it was too late for us to go back. We were relieved that we were too far away to hear their remarks, for we felt sure that a lady who has made up her mind and face to be photographed is not pleased when she finds the photographer disappearing over a mountain.

Despite the overwhelming beauty of the country, the day was hot and the precipitous climbing very trying, and we were soon asking Alfredo how long before we should stop for lunch, for we had already covered five leagues, a fair distance over rough mountains. His reply was:

" Una legua más " (one league more), the classic reply in Mexico to all inquiring travellers, whether the actual distance in question is three miles or three hundred. " Una legua más " had become a chant in which we took a sardonic pleasure before we arrived at a rancho where he was certain we would get food and water; but at the house we found all silent and deserted.

We were disappointed, but not more so than the horses, which had already disposed themselves under the shade trees, and it was with the greatest reluctance that they took the rising road again. We rode onward for a couple of hours in the hope that we would strike another ranch, but none appeared, and we had become ravenous when we discovered at a distance from the trail the roof of a native hut.

A cross-patch old woman responded to our knock, but to our ardent inquiries for food replied that she had nothing, not even *blanquillos* — " little white ones " — as eggs are sometimes called in Mexico. She refused even to give us water, possibly because she was afraid of us. We turned away mournfully but were cheered by the discovery of a spring close by. Here we threw ourselves down, drank copiously, and rested. We could not avoid thinking and talking about food, for we had had nothing that day except a pre-daylight cup of coffee at San Juan. And then a thought occurred to us. The old crone had denied having any food in the house, but she might have some cold tortillas. We gave Pedro a coin and sent him back to inquire. He returned with a stack of tortillas about a foot high. They were thoroughly cold and leathery, but when washed down with crystal spring water, they made a meal for which at that moment we would not have exchanged any banquet in the world.

Our afternoon's march was through a region where the wild character of life gradually disappeared, giving place to planted fields of cane and corn and groves of hardwoods well thinned out by the chopper's axe.

At dark we reached the pretty village of Bochil, with the hand of the Spanish builder stamped all over its arches. Here was

the outpost of civilization where we were to part with our horses and our guides, and find the rest of our way down to the railroad and the Pacific Ocean by automobile. We found a hotelito before which our mule immediately lay down, plainly signifying that he was not going a step farther.

## XVIII

# *AN INDIAN SUNDAY*

WHEN we arose from our mat-covered beds the next morning and looked out of the narrow window that opened upon the village's main thoroughfare, the dress of two passing Indians signified that we were again among a people new to us. They wore long buff-colored robes, embroidered at the top and fringed at the bottom. The sleeves were short and loose, hanging somewhat like those of a kimono. Their hats were flat-brimmed and pointed at the crown.

But what fastened our attention in particular were the sandals of the younger man which had a high shield extending from the heel more than six inches up the back of the leg. This high-backed sandal was favored by the Maya warriors of old, as revealed in their bas-reliefs, but this was the first time we had seen it worn by any living person. The older man, from whose chin hung a sparse grey beard, carried himself with a pronounced dignity, walking with a long, free stride and carrying in his hand a tall, pointed staff. The two met a friend and stopped to speak with him, but first the newcomer took off his hat and made a deep obeisance before the patriarch, bending his left leg but extending the right straight

out behind him. The old man acknowledged the bow with a stately inclination of his head and touched the younger man on the hair, in a kind of accolade.

We breakfasted on coffee and pan dulce with Alfredo and Pedro for the last time and saw them turn backward toward the high mountains with sincere regret. They had been excellent companions on the road, merry, skillful, and obliging, and now that we were on civilization's edge once more, we feared we should not look upon their like again. Our parting salutation was our slogan of the road: " Una legua más! " To which they responded with one of the laughs which had cemented our friendship on the trail.

There being a highway — of a sort — from Bochil to Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of Chiapas, we learned that we might have an automobile come up for us by using the government telegraph line to the latter place. The telegraph office was in charge of a boy of fourteen who gave our written message a critical inspection and shook his head over it gravely. It was not in good Spanish, he observed, but if we wished he would correct it for us. He also remarked that he could save us some money by eliminating a few unnecessary words. We gave him permission to revise the telegram completely. He then advised us to say that " dos alemanes " — two Germans, wanted the car.

" All right; except that we are not Germans."

" I know," he said. " But if you want the car, you had better let me call you Germans."

And so did the telegram go through.

## II

Bochil lies in a narrow trough between two rows of high hills. We climbed one of these to obtain a view of the rumpled country. From this high point we descried in the distance, lying at one end of the thread-like village, a series of nine mounds. Four of them were from twenty to thirty feet high, but the rest had been partly flattened by being plowed over. We came down to examine them and found evidence that they had once been truncated cones similar to the cerros of ancient Indian towns in Yucatan. On each mound we found shaped stones which left little doubt that temples and possibly the houses of chiefs had once crowned these elevations. Inquiry, however, among the neighbors brought out no information. The mounds had always been there, they said.

We sought out the oracle of the community, an affable old mestizo, but he knew nothing about the cerros except that undoubtedly they were very old. We did learn from him, however, that locally the language was much like the Maya tongue. For example, the Maya words for rabbit, *t'ool,* and earth, *luum,* were the same in the local dialect, which contained two *idiomas* — Tzotzil and Zoq. This made us feel sure that we were still on the old Maya path which came up from Guatemala and crossed the Sierra Madre to Yucatan, or, as we preferred to call it, the trail of the Red Tiger.

In the evening we received an invitation to have a game in the local billiard parlor. This turned out to be situated in the church!

## III

HARK! Hark! The dogs bark, the Indians are coming to town!"

This amended quotation from Mother Goose was bound to come to mind the next morning when files of burden-bearers were seen heading from all directions towards the shaded plaza. It was Sunday, the favorite market day throughout Mexico, and there was a tramp, tramp up every street of sweating brown groups bent low under immense burdens. Not the least heavy laden were the girl-children, most of them with sweet, cherubic faces, whose dusty hair and muddy little feet showed that they had come from considerable distances. The produce being brought in was of wonderfully variegated description — pigs and chickens, gourds and clay jars, mangoes and blackberries, joints of purple sugar-cane and green cherries, guanabanas and mameys.

The women wore bodices or shoulder mantles woven and embroidered in red, blue and white. The designs were nearly always geometric and had been carefully worked out. The cloaks and tunics of the men, evidently hand-woven, carried less embroidery, but fringes at the arm openings and bottom hem were always conspicuous. A few of the younger men wore elaborately worked pouches of leather or furred skin, shaped and tasselled like the Scottish sporran. Tunics, called tchu by the men and sequil by the women, were confined at the waist by beautifully woven bands or girdles called chuc.

As soon as the men had deposited their burdens in the plaza and made a few sales, they adjourned to the neighboring bars and cantinas, leaving the women to carry on the sordid affairs of commerce. They got drunk with great rapidity, for tequila and aguardiente are potent liquors. Pulque, the devouring liquor of northern Mexico, is not sold in the south, since it will not bear long journeys.

The Mexican Indian, when sober, nearly always carries a certain charm of manner and body, but drunk he is a deplorable sight. His features disintegrate, merge, and become a pulpy mass. His natural reticence and passivity give place to truculence and sometimes abusiveness.

All day long the women gathered a few centavos at a time out under the glaring sun, while the men drank the money away by the peso. The cantinas became hot, dripping, and odoriferous. Quarrels broke out and cheap revolvers were brandished. Feeble old Indians dropped asleep in corners or lay out in the sun. When patrons could no longer pay, the bartenders, among whom were brassy-voiced women, snatched their hats or knitted bags and held them for security. About four o'clock in the afternoon the female vendors of the plaza packed up their unsold goods, called at the cantinas to collect their husbands and ransom their hats, and, dragging or supporting their lords, took the long trail back home to their huts among the hills.

According to ancient Mayan customs, the men were permitted to get drunk periodically, but from such celebrations the women were excluded under severe penalties. The drink used was the sacred *balché,* a compound of bark and honey fermented in water. On this occasion we saw no women drunk

except two desolate old crones who were regarded as very abandoned creatures. The bartenders scorned them and the children walked around them with repelled, frightened eyes.

## IV

At nightfall there was the sound of cheering in the plaza and a running of small boys. Our automobile had arrived from Tuxtla. The driver, who in the eyes of the local natives was a figure of glamor and heroism, satisfied himself that we were the "two Germans" who had ordered the car and informed us with dignity that we should start at daylight the next morning. He was accompanied by a helper who, while he rubbed down the machine and filled its radiator, held a levée. Most of the inhabitants gathered around to ask innumerable questions and to gaze upon the inanimate animal which is destined to replace the soft-footed Indian as burden-bearer and the tasselled horse as passenger-carrier when, at no distant day, Chiapas is "opened up."

We rushed away the next morning at a speed which ignored rocks and boulders, scattered up-coming files of laden burros, and delivered us that afternoon at Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of the state.

## XIX

## *ARRESTED AGAIN*

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ is an old town, its streets laid with cobblestones in quaint patterns, that has been asleep on the southern slopes of the Sierra Madre for many generations. The first characteristic which attracted our attention was the savory cooking offered in its little restaurants. Nowhere else in Mexico did we discover the variety and palate-pleasing qualities possessed by the wholesome dishes of this odd and remote old town. The dish most often served was a flavorous stew composed of several different vegetables, a bit of meat, and a sauce of fragrant mashed herbs.

Tuxtla's most engaging sight was that of undulating lines of young women on their way to the market-place bearing on their heads immense spreading gourds full of brilliant, odorous flowers. These gourds are large calabashes sawed in two horizontally, and painted with exuberant designs in flaring colors. They are known as *hiclapestli,* and are made and painted by a designer at the neighboring village of Chiapa de Corto.

In order to see the flower-women with their decorated basket-gourds massed in the great covered market-place, we went there early one morning and found a scene to be likened to a

gorgeous spectacle of the musical comedy stage. The most elaborately painted hiclapestli would be too florid for Nordic surroundings, but their splashing colors are in miraculous accord with the brown skins of the women and their gay huipils, the embroidered jackets favored particularly by the Zapotecs of southern Mexico.

*Often Seen Together; Beauty and Deformity*

The artist member of the expedition was trying to make a few sketches of these colorful ladies when a soldier came up, and laying a hand across the sketchbook, demanded that the operation be stopped. When we protested, proclaiming the harmless nature of our activities, he grew excited and sum-

moned other soldiers. This caused a commotion that aroused the whole market.

This made sketching impossible and we were about to withdraw to await a more favorable time, when an officer with a whip came up and ordered us to halt. He was a large, heavy-set man with a fierce mustache, his brown features becoming black with anger and suspicion. We suggested that we retire to the sidewalk outside to discuss the matter, but he announced that we had insulted his soldiers, and he wanted to know who we were and what we were doing here. The usual crowds foamed up, and since such situations can easily set a mob in motion, the incident rapidly took on an ugly aspect. The officer was in no mood to listen to our explanations or to examine our identification papers. He ordered us to the nearest police station, there to face the commandant. Instantly we were surrounded by a squad of soldiers and marched off to the station, followed by a regiment of idlers.

At the station we were ordered to sit down in an anteroom and await the arrival of the commandant. The manner in which this was said and the black looks directed at us from the armed men who guarded the door seemed to indicate that the commandant could not do less than shoot us. There was a long wait before we were escorted into the private office of the Jefe. He received us with a lowering mien and demanded to know why we had insulted his soldiers. He said he had been given to understand that we had pushed them violently about the market-place. When we scouted this notion, he requested us to empty our pockets and show him every paper that we carried on our persons. Since we were wearing light tropical clothes almost devoid of pockets, this

was easily done, and the Jefe was soon knotting his brow over our harmless sketches and attached notes.

He discovered various sketches of familiar objects in which he became interested, and remarking that he had a small son who could draw just as well as this, he gradually forgot his suspicion and entered upon a discussion of aesthetics in general

*Haled before Another Jefe*

and the graphic arts in particular. The colloquy ended by his consenting to pose for a portrait sketch of himself. The guards put away their guns to peep from behind and offer criticisms. In this atmosphere the matter of our arrest began to seem absurd, and the Jefe, suddenly recollecting more important affairs that must be attended to, dismissed us. We exchanged cigarettes and handshakes all around, and were bowed out of the station with all the honors of a war that failed to occur.

Transportation out of Tuxtla proved to be difficult to obtain and we were compelled to split our expedition in two, one of us taking the only vacant seat in an " express " bullock cart and the other finding space in a Ford car which was to descend to the railroad a day later.

## XX

## *DOWN THE MOUNTAINS IN AN OX-CART*

WE were only part of the way down the slope of the Sierra Madre when our Ford car slipped its brakes entirely. More than once it had threatened to do so; for in its seats it carried, besides the chauffeur, a fat Spanish travelling man, a Mexican lady with a half-grown son, and me; with a tall sad man from Tuxtla standing on one running board and the chauffeur's helper on the other; and with the mud-guards, hood, and rear springs laden with trunks, boxes, bags, blankets, and bursting suitcases.

The chauffeur was a slender, large-eyed Indian lad of not more than eighteen. From my seat in the rear I saw, as the car began to plunge, the brown behind the boy's ears begin to turn saffron. The Spanish traveller in the front seat, with whom I had up to now held no communication, turned on me a glance of mingled fright and disgust; the Mexican lady hid her face in a shawl, gripped her son's hand, and murmured a prayer.

The road, which was little more than a burro trail, was of the most frightful description. Deep ruts in stony soil alternated with bouncing mud-holes, while stones, stumps, and boulders

stretched down the mountainside in front of us as far as one could see. Vainly the chauffeur jammed on the useless brakes, gripping the wheel which every moment threatened to wrench itself from his grasp as the car plunged from mud-hole to boulder. The Ford gathered speed like a rolling snowball and bounced heavily from side to side between the jaws of a nar-

*Our Bullocks Drink Thirstily*

row passage cut through high mud-banks. The road suddenly jutted out from the side of the mountain in a shelf-like form.

Well below us the tops of trees pointed derisive fingers at us, and I remember glimpsing a high and bald mound, with a craggy apex, on which young goats were bounding playfully into the air as they followed their grazing mothers. On we

flashed past a cattle pasture, in which immense herds with wide-branching horns were grazing. Atop a bush a zenzontle alighted, inflated his throat, and began to pour forth his imitations.

We continued to race down the mountain, for most of the time, luckily, over beds of partly dried mud which to some extent retarded our descent. We rounded a bend in the road and confronted a huge array of rounded boulders over which it was impossible for our car to pass without being wrecked, and I wondered exactly what bones would be broken, provided we escaped with whole necks.

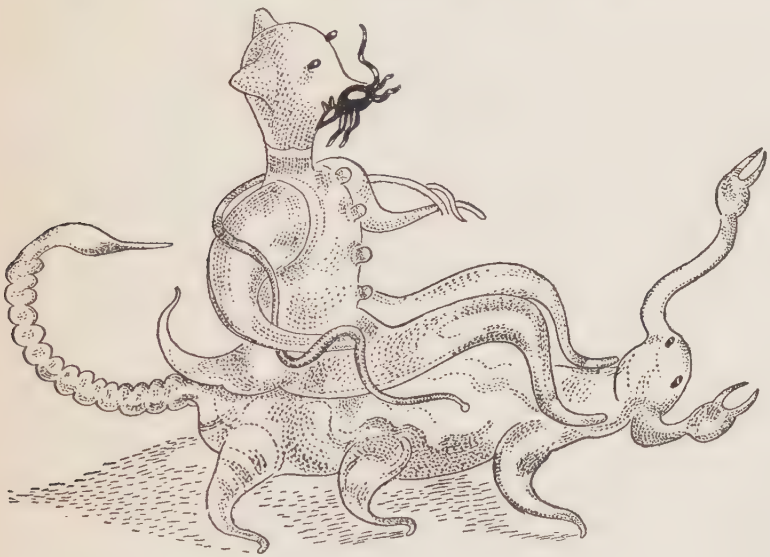
At one side of these boulders was a deep pig-wallow in which a dozen porkers were stretched at ease under the baking sun. The chauffeur twisted his wheel desperately, aimed for the mud-hole, and plunged down among the pigs. The wheels instantly sank into the brown-black mud up to the hubs and stopped.

As soon as it was realized that we had escaped undamaged, a reaction set in and we all sat in our seats and abused the chauffeur, his car, his employer, the road, and the country. We demanded answers to a hundred futile questions, but the boy, shrugging his shoulders with Indian disdain, made no reply, merely sinking back into his seat and trembling with exertion and fright.

We scrambled out into the mud and picked our way across the hummocks of the pig-wallow to dry land, where we stood helplessly until a file of Indian women came by, bearing immense burdens on their heads. They showed no interest in our car or our plight, merely cutting a casual glance at us as if a barely averted automobile wreck was an ordinary affair. They

told us that beyond a clump of trees in the distance was a pueblo with an inn, and we agreed to go there, leaving the chauffeur and his helper to bring along our baggage as best they could.

The Spaniard, clutching a small bag which clinked with silver pesos, preceded me down the rocky road, muttering and cursing because he would be unutterably late in arriving at his



*Fantasy in Colored Glass by Indian Artist*

eventual destination on the railway line up from Guatemala. But upon our entering the little red tiled inn, he instantly turned to me cheerfully and offered to treat me to a bottle of beer.

The inn was in charge of two young señoritas, probably fifteen and seventeen years old, dressed in exaggerated flapper style patterned after the clothes revealed in the American motion pictures which reach even remote Mexican villages.

Their skirts were very, very short, and in a region where the women cannot always afford shoes, they were wearing excessively high-heeled slippers which clicked to and fro upon the tiled floor.

The Spaniard and I sat down in the cantina over our beer and wondered what we should do next. Villagers came in and peered at us curiously. One of them informed us there was no need to worry, because another car would be going down the mountain the very next day. The Spaniard exploded. The very next day, indeed! He was going on within an hour if he had to walk all the way.

At one end of the cantina was a huge marimba, so long that at least four men could have played upon it, with room to spare. Two urchins came up and asked us if we would like some music. They were not more than eight years old, and they had to drag up a bench before they could reach the keys. We were ready for this bit of diversion but believed the youngsters would give us some infantile tune with a halting, childish execution. They attacked the great instrument, however, with the utmost aplomb and played several popular airs in perfect time. It was amusing to hear them draw out the long chords with the passionate feeling which every Mexican imparts to the music he plays. For this performance we gave them a few coppers; they said gracias gravely, and ran out into the street where they resumed a game with companions of the same age.

We did not ask for luncheon, but in a few minutes the two señoritas came in and announced that *la comida* was ready in the patio. It was a very good luncheon, consisting of eggs rancheros, a salad of onions and radishes, the inevitable black

*Lunch at Roadside Inn, Chiapas*

beans with which all Mexicans complete a repast, and black-burnt coffee. The rest of our automobile party soon joined us at the table, the Mexican lady looking very pale and exhausted. She was unable to eat more than a few sparing mouthfuls, but her son had a second helping of everything.

As we strolled away from the table, our two Indian *automovilistas* came driving up in the Ford, grinning widely. They had somehow repaired the brakes and declared that we should make the rest of the trip without further trouble; so after permitting the chauffeur and his helper to have a hasty bite of goat's milk cheese, frijoles and tortillas, we resumed our journey.

## II

The chauffeur, his confidence restored, drove the rattling car along at reckless speed, promising to deliver us at the railroad by nightfall. We reached the foot of our mountain and emerged upon a broad plain where we split trains of laden burros and slowed down only when we encountered droves of fat cattle, whose bulls occasionally lowered their horns and threatened to charge our ancient Lizzie.

And then it began to rain. The wet season had already started, and we were well prepared for the showers which we knew would fall at intervals every afternoon for the next half-year. But this was no shower. It was an opening of the black tropical heavens. The raindrops appeared to be as large as the end of one's thumb; they beat upon our curtains as if they were hail.

The riders on the running board, despite their ponchos, were soon drenched, and the brim of the sad-eyed man's sombrero drooped lower and lower, shedding little rivulets of moisture down the back of his neck. Driven by a breeze, the rain easily penetrated the numerous cracks in our curtains and soon we were no less drenched than the outboard passengers whose plight we had been pitying.

And then we stuck in the mud. We stuck there with wheels that spun loosely in the ruts. The road was a soft black soup. The tires could get no grip whatever.

It was suggested that the car might pull itself out if we relieved it of our weight, so out we scrambled into the mud and stood in a desolate group, comically resembling the zopilotes, which were wetly visible upon a nearby tree. But the car's wheels had by now churned what was previously a soup into a thin consommé. We tried to build a roadway with twigs and stones laid in the floating ruts, but with no result. All hands were profuse with advice and counsel except the Spaniard, who walked off through the dense grey rain to a little promontory, where he stood with one hand thrust into the breast of his poncho in an attitude resembling a defeated Napoleon.

We got back into the car and sat there in silence. No one could think of anything more to do, and we could only sit, pull at wet cigarettes, and wait for something to turn up.

In an hour a bullock cart creaked up behind us. Its driver was a tall and taciturn Indian who with visible contempt accepted a peso, unhitched his bullocks, tied them to our car, and dragged us out. We drove along hummingly for a few miles

and then we stuck no less sickeningly than before. We sat in the rain and waited until the bullock cart again caught up with us and once more dragged us out.

Three times this operation was repeated, after which the bullock cart turned off upon a side road and disappeared, considerably to our regret, because we had hopes that as long as it was in our rear it would somehow continue to drag us out of mud-holes until, in the course of time, we might complete our journey. The mud grew thicker at the bottom and thinner at the top, and finally we stuck with a certainty from which we at once realized there would be no escape.

Shower after shower came up, soaked us anew, and rushed on. We remained imbedded in the slush until the last shower of the evening had spent itself and the setting sun came out dimly red. Shadows fell between the mountains, and bats came out, flapping their wings with a gaiety which under the circumstances we resented.

And then two bullock carts came up behind us. Our driver began to bargain for another rescue, but our voluble passengers protested, announcing their intention of leaving the fotingo to its muddy fate. They struck a bargain with the head-driver to take us to the next village, about five miles distant. This driver was a white man with a shock of blond curly hair. At first he was disposed to take us and our effects aboard for ten pesos, but prompted by a slim Indian girl in the back of his covered cart, whose sweet face contrasted strangely with the shrewdness of her hard little mouth, he raised the price to fifteen pesos, which is $7.50 in American money — an exorbitant price, for which our passengers cursed him under their breaths.

*The Bullock Cart*

" Hombre, pero eso *es* dinero, — that *is* money," commented our chauffeur somewhat admiringly, perhaps because he was secretly resentful of our desertion.

The Mexican lady and her son, with their heavy bags, took the first cart, while the Spaniard and I took the rear.

## III

The driver of this cart, an Indian youth about twenty years old and with a great cluster of black chrysanthemum hair hanging over his lustrous eyes, made room for me beside him, and slowly we began banging and bumping over the rocky road. The cart had a high, round roof of flexible bark, with an interior lining of reed matting. The slight air space between these two covers and the draft from front to rear kept the cart cool, and after I had learned how to adjust myself to the slow bumping of the vehicle, I found it comfortable enough and was soon enjoying the ride.

At first the Indian boy was aloof and noncommunicative, but a small packet of black cigarettes established us on a friendly footing, and soon we were carrying on a desultory conversation. His only driving instrument was a long goad made of a slender rod, with a nail-point affixed in the end. He managed his team with this and an alternating series of hisses and whistlings. When he wished to stop, he knocked on the shaft with the butt of his goad.

He hitched his bullocks by lashing their branching horns

to the cross-piece at the end of the shaft. This is the old Spanish method, an unnecessarily cruel one, since it throws the weight of the cart on the animals' horns instead of their sturdy shoulders and breasts. However, the bullocks seemed not to mind and plowed their way through the mud and over jutting rocks with a kind of resigned ease, their long tails swinging from side to side and the enormous muscles of their thighs springing up and down like gigantic pistons.

From time to time we squeezed past long lines of other bullock carts proceeding in the opposite direction. Occasionally I noticed a driver asleep on the floor of his cart, his face down and his head pointing towards his team. I asked the lad the reason for this. He explained that sometimes a bullock train must travel all day and all night to meet some emergency, and that in such cases the drivers have to sleep when they can. They train themselves to catch a nap face downward in this fashion, so that when necessary to guide their bullocks they have only to raise their heads to see what is going on.

It was now becoming dark and we passed, camped on grassy spaces near a brook or spring, large groups of carts which had outspanned for the night. By the side of each cart women were cooking meals while their lords were loafing at their ease, gossiping together, or playing a guitar. I remarked to the lad that a bullock driver's life seemed not a bad one and asked him if he could get me a job. He considered the question carefully, and then asked: "Have you got a *muchacha*?"

*Muchacha* is the Spanish word for girl, but in Mexico it is

an all-inclusive term signifying any woman who is useful as well as ornamental.

" No," I replied. " But must you have a muchacha before you can drive a cart? "

" Who would do your cooking for you? " he said. " Besides, you have to have a muchacha to talk to. If you don't, you will be lonely."

*Station on Pan-American Railway*

" Well then, I will get a muchacha. But I am not very well acquainted hereabouts. Couldn't you get me one? "

He glanced at me to see if I were in earnest, and again reflected several moments before replying.

" I think I can get one for you," he said, " but she is a little old, and not very bonita — pretty."

" Where is *your* muchacha? " I asked.

" She is waiting for me down at the railroad. She did not come with me this trip because she wanted to visit her mother.

It is my muchacha's sister whom I mean to get as your muchacha."

"Do you think she would come?"

"Yes. At first she might be frightened, but I think she would come. She is a good girl, but she's had no luck getting a man."

## IV

We reached a village, consisting of a score of houses built of stone or adobe, just as another storm, gravid with rain, broke above our heads. We stopped at the first clean-looking house and asked the proprietor if he could take us in. He said he had no room, but there was a hotelito around the corner. We found this to be a low, white stone structure beneath a gigantic ceiba tree. It was clean and comfortable-looking, but we muddied its cement floor sadly with our dripping selves and belongings. The place was in charge of a buxom young woman, with a face that bespoke great practicality, and her white-haired father, an old man looking curiously like representations of Father Time. At first she was doubtful whether she could take us in, saying that her few accommodations were already full, but the father said it was no time to be driving people out into the rain. They gave us a supper of eggs and large yellow lumps of the goat's milk cheese which is a favorite food in this part of Chiapas.

We were put immediately to bed. All the tables and other furniture were moved out of the common room or shoved against

the walls, and their places taken by a series of rectangular frames criss-crossed with strips of rawhide which served as springs. Over these woven strips was thrown a *petate,* the reed mat which serves a thousand purposes in southern Mexico. The other guests proved to be a Mexican officer, dressed in white, with high yellow boots fitted with enormous spurs; and two nondescript travellers, also wet, who were probably traders. The officer announced that he must have a hammock, and after much search one was found for him and strung across a corner of the large room. Into this he piled with a sigh of relief, lighting a cigarette which supplied the only illumination after the one candle had been suddenly removed. I had brought along a heavy wool serape, but even under this I was cold, and I wondered how my companions, who were without any cover, could go so quickly to sleep, which they did, as evidenced by a chorus of snores arising from all present, except the quiet Mexican lady and her submissive son.

Some time after midnight I was awakened by the crashing of another storm, marked by bolt upon bolt of blue lightning and thunder so violent that the surrounding mountains seemed to be toppling over. And then I heard a rumbling, shaking sound, of gathering volume, which seemed to come from a distance. I had never seen or heard a cattle stampede on a great scale, but I knew without being told that this was one.

In a moment the continuous murmur of the cows, the bawling of the calves, and the snorts of the bulls could be heard. And then the house, which sat on the edge of a grassy plain, was surrounded, and the bludgeonings of the thunder were drowned in the sound of innumerable hoofs. I went to the door and looked out through its small barred window. The

lightning revealed an ocean of moving backs, extending as far as one could see. The edge of the herd was guarded on all sides by lines of bulls — *toros padres,* father bulls — which repeatedly raised their heads and challenged the heavens with brassy defiance. The cows and calves were running, leaping, and plunging, but only the immense pressure of the herd behind them forced the bulls into an occasional trot. They preferred to maintain a dignified, fearless stride even when being carried along in a direction which none of them had determined.

The quivering lightning made curiously plain numerous small details of the giant animals as they passed. I could see the moisture dripping from their ears, the sharp angles of their hind legs, and even the wetness of their hoofs as they planted their feet in the grass with a solidity and positiveness seen only in bulls. The weight of their massed bodies could be sensed even at a distance. However, they avoided touching the hotel, as if it contained some mysterious taboo, and in a few minutes the last of them were out of sight, roaring into the distance.

## V

The next morning was clear and clean, smiling with that almost conscious gaiety which the face of nature wears after a night of debauchery. In the still darkened room we refugees raised our heads and stared at each other in the resentment that comes on being called from dreams into a world of reality — a reality always connected with a smell of

*An Officer's Castigation*

cooking. We made our morning ablutions at a rain barrel in the patio. The dapper officer and I arrived at the barrel at almost the same instant. He bowed to me and signified that I was to go first. I bowed to him and said I would wait. Several bows having brought us nowhere, we compromised by dipping water out of the barrel into separate vessels and washing our faces sumultaneously, grinning at each other with a sudden realization of the absurdities loose in the world.

After breakfast, the Spaniard approached and said something in the rapid way which made it difficult for me to understand him. I merely replied, "*Sí, sí,*" and followed him out across the little plaza. We came to a little shelter used as a station for those bullock trains which maintain a kind of express service, and found there a telephone instrument in charge of a señorita who agreed, on receipt of a fee, to telephone down to the nearest station on the railway line and ask that an automobile be sent up for us. She was sure that we would get the car, and the Spaniard, as was usual with him in moments of exhilaration, suggested that it was now time to have a bottle of beer.

We found one in the village's tiny cantina where the bartender graciously saluted us as caballeros and remarked that we had been having *mucha agua,* much water. We returned to the hotel and announced to the Mexican lady and her son, who by now alone were left from our original list of passengers, that our troubles were over and agreed with her that it would be indeed pleasant to ride in an upholstered automobile after being bumped about in ox-carts. But our glee was premature. The telephone-lady sent for us and announced that

the automobile would not come up the mountains so far for us, on account of the condition of the roads, but would meet us halfway. The intervening distance we must cover in some other fashion.

Again we had no choice but to travel in ox-carts. We asked all the villagers in sight where we could procure them, but none knew. We went back to the hotel with hanging heads, and then the white-haired patriarch of the inn remarked that he could not permit his guests to be stranded in such a fashion and that he would supply us with his own ox-team and cart, provided that we would not expect to be taken to our destination at any great speed, because his *bueyes* were great spoiled darlings, and were, in fact, so lazy they resembled cats rather than bullocks.

After a delay which made the Spaniard fidget, the patriarch brought his team around and backed the cart up to the door. The bullocks were huge, round, cream-colored animals with polished horns, and so plump and sleek that they did indeed resemble cats rather than bulls. We packed the inside of the cart with our belongings, the fat Spaniard planting himself on one of my suitcases, which gradually became a concave pancake under his weight, crushing, I afterwards discovered, the curious Indian pottery which I had gathered at San Juan.

The Mexican officer waited to see us off, standing beside his beautiful clay-colored mare caparisoned in a tasselled bridle, a deep saddle of carved and chased leather, and a blanket edged with parti-colored fringes. He saluted and dashed away, all the village watching him dwindle down the road which crossed the plain.

## VI

This time our driver was a stout, round-faced, practical-looking Indian who took the Mexican lady under his wing, seated her directly behind him, and was constantly doing things that would add to her comfort. This lady was evidently standing the trip badly. She was exhausted and was holding on only by dint of will-power which, despite her slender frame, proved to be considerable. Her son, however, was having an adventure which he enjoyed. He whiled away the hours by the incessant consumption of various fruits. The road was bad, but there was some compensation in the soaring verdure around us, the tumultuous mountains, and above all in the Chiapan clouds. Never were there such clouds as hang over the broad and brown earth of the state of Chiapas. Each seems to consist of a solid bale of bursting cotton, so dense is its texture, so gleaming white its down.

We were accompanied by a mongrel battalion of volunteer dogs. The pack was led by a long-limbed, brown and white animal which vainly sought for some excitement which would mitigate the monotony of the road. He was incessantly uncovering tracks and trails about which he worked his followers into a fine state of excitement, but he had a weakness for becoming quickly bored, and frequently deserted his companions, in the midst of some doggy discovery, to hunt up something more entertaining.

At one point on the road we passed a little rancho, in the yard of which a number of sows lay sleeping. The brown and

white dog ran up to one of these, where she lay among her piglets, nudged her with his nose, and when she stood up, seized her by the tail, to which he hung grimly while the pig raised a volley of piercing screams. He was joined by the other dogs, all of which gathered round the sow and began to tug at her ears and legs while their leader continued to pull furiously at her tail. The other pigs raised an alarm and the bedlam became terrific.

In the midst of the battle sudden reinforcements appeared in the form of three huge boars with snarling lips curved above broken yellow tusks. They charged the dogs with bristles standing black and erect on their spines. The noise was doubled, and the owner of the rancho came out to demand that our driver call off his dogs. The latter shrugged his shoulders, declared that none of the dogs were his, and suggested that if the *ranchero* didn't like the fight, he stop it by kicking the dogs off.

While this colloquy was going on, several neighbors of the ranchero, attracted by the racket, came up and took his side against us. With a human argument added to the din of the war amongst the animals, the noise gave us headaches, and for a moment the whole situation looked ugly when the ranchero told us that we must call off our dogs or he would get his gun. Our cart driver resented this threat and we might easily have found ourselves the center of a general conflict, had not the dog which started all the commotion suddenly released his hold on the sow's tail and called his companions off with a gesture which seemed to say: "Oh, well, this is no particular fun anyhow."

This incident did us all a world of good. We had previously

had no subject of common interest to talk about. As we drove on, our driver rehearsed the whole scene, illustrating with his hands and body the discovery of the pigs, the approach of the dogs, the seizure of the sow, and her sudden release. It was remarkably well done — our Indian had gifts as an actor — and he and the Spaniard rocked themselves back and forth with laughter. They even compelled the Mexican lady to join in, and she too at length responded to the tonic and became visibly improved in spirits.

## VII

At the several mountain streams which we had crossed, the driver had refused to allow his bullocks to drink lest they become water-heavy; but now we arrived at a pool where he unhitched them and allowed them to drink to the bursting point. Here we also stopped long enough to have a luncheon of cold tortillas and frijoles, wrapped up in banana leaves by our hosts at the hotel. At the end of an hour we were ready to start again, but to the consternation of our driver, we found that our bullock-team, which had been grazing in the bushes, was in difficulties. Both animals were lying down as if in distress, the right-hand bullock being stretched on his side with his eyes distended and his breath coming short as if he were suffering great pain.

"Mercy of God!" exclaimed the Spaniard, "They are dying!"

He ran over to the pool and dipped a finger in it.

" It's warm," he shouted. " It's hot! Man, you have killed the beasts. They are full of hot water and now they will die."

The driver was frightened. He hastily freed the bullocks from their lashings. The left-hand animal quietly rose to its feet, chewing its cud as if nothing had happened, but the other bullock continued to lie prostrate, its eyes rolling, until the driver, who had kept the goad in his hand, happened to draw its sharp point against the dying bull's ribs. The animal, with a snort, instantly raised itself to its feet and stood firmly on four legs, with every appearance of being in perfect health. The driver's eyes grew wide with astonishment. He vented a giant kick into the side of the bull. He called it a billygoat and a donkey.

" He was playing dead again! " he shouted. " Yellow-tailed child of the devil! He was no more sick than you or me. I know him of old. He is always playing dead in the hope of escaping work, but for a little moment he almost had me deceived. Yes, he almost tricked me. Back up to this cart, you thief and play-actor, or I'll show you a trick or two."

As we once more started off, the Spaniard looked at me, humped his shoulders and spread his hands, and remarked in a low monotone, as if talking to himself, that he was certain we would never arrive safely at the railroad, that the journey had been cursed from the beginning, and that our bones would some day be found on the side of one of these damnable mountains, dried by the sun and picked clean by zopilotes.

This outburst drew a rebuke from the Mexican lady. She was indignant at the speaker's impiety. God was merciful, she said, and would yet bring us through. These trials were sent only to test our faith. Why could he not be courageous, she asked,

like this señor Americano? He never uttered a word of complaint.

This was embarrassing; but it was no time to explain to the accuser that the absence of my complaints was due chiefly to the lack of fluent Spanish in which to express them. I feared that the fat Spaniard would resent this reflection on his courage, and might, perhaps, transfer part of his resentment to me; but he accepted the reprimand with a dignified bow and resumed his seat in a corner of the cart, looking very much like a sulky small boy.

## VIII

Late that afternoon we arrived at the village where the automobile, coming up from the railroad, was to meet us. We stopped in front of a little inn. At one side a dilapidated motor car was standing. The Spaniard ran over, patted it lovingly, and turned to us with a beaming face. But a sulky boy raised himself from the rear seat where he had been asleep and announced that the car belonged to another party.

" Just our luck! " exclaimed the Spaniard.

A tall Indian youth, his teeth glittering with gold fillings, roused himself from a bench on the porch and asked who was the jefe of our expedition. I pointed at the Spaniard, and he pointed at me.

" At any rate," said the youth, " the car you ordered up from Arriaga is here."

" Where? " said the Spaniard.

*The Virgin of Guadalupe*

" Around the corner."

We looked, and there it was — a new and shiny car which was being rubbed down by the helper, while a cluster of urchins encircled it and made comments. Never did a cheap American automobile look so beautiful.

" We are saved! " cried the Spaniard, throwing his arms around me and patting me on the small of the back, " and now let's go and have a bottle of beer."

We had our beer, also a lunch of the usual eggs *rancheros,* beans and tortillas, all savory and comforting.

An Indian girl, tall and lissome, was our waitress. The heat, the long ride, the food, and even the beer, which was slightly salty, had combined to give me a thirst both wide and deep, and I asked if I could have a gourd of water.

" *Cómo no* — why not? " she said, and fetched it. I drained it, and asked for another.

" *Cómo no?* She fetched it, I drained it, and asked for another.

" *Cómo no?* she repeated without a shade of a smile and watched me drain the third gourd as if this were an ordinary event.

The Spaniard, however, was astonished. " Why don't you have beer? " he asked. " But no. To quench that thirst would cost you six pesos a time."

The driver tied our bags and belongings to the running boards and mudguards, and once more we started out down the slopes of the Sierra Madre. The road was as bad as ever; it seemed impossible that any car could endure the incessant bumping and heaving, but our new chauffeur drove us along at a speed for which in the States he would have

been arrested. In all parts of the world the chauffeur is a proud and scornful being, but none was ever so haughty and regardless of life and limb as the Mexican Indian who wears the backwards-turned Yankee cap which proclaims him an *automovilista.*

Again and again we begged our young man to be more careful, to spare the lives of the pigs and turkeys which got under our tires, and to slacken speed when negotiating curves or passing through groups of men and cattle. But his only reply was an indulgent smile from his flashing gold teeth and an assurance that it was " 'sta buen " — all right.

Just before nightfall we reached a swollen rivulet whose waters were many yards over their usual banks. We tried to check the driver, but he took the stream at virtually full speed, bouncing our heads against the top of the car and sending the spray flying as if from the bow of an ocean liner. Our belongings were, of course, totally submerged. When we remonstrated with the youth, his naïve reply was that it was better for our baggage to go through the water fast, because if it went through slowly, the water would have time to soak into the cracks!

We now came out on a road upon which some work had been done. In places it was pleasingly level and smooth, and the driver promised us that we should soon be seeing the lights of Arriaga. But just as the sun went down we came to the edge of a stream fifty feet across. The height of the water as marked on tree trunks indicated that in spots it was several feet deep. We prepared to leap upon the driver, choke him into submission, and compel him to pause and reflect before he tried to negotiate this stream, but to our surprise he stopped of

his own accord, getting out of the car and remarking that now we would have time for a smoke — perhaps several smokes. We would have to wait, he explained, until the stream went down enough to avoid stopping the engine.

" How long will that be? "

" Perhaps twenty minutes, or perhaps twenty hours — how should I know? "

The Spaniard was speechless. He could only snort through his nostrils and glare at the driver viciously.

We waited an hour watching the fireflies streaming across the face of the darkness, and listening to the owls among the thick trees. For half this time the water swelled visibly, and then began to retreat with equal celerity. In a much shorter time than we had dared to expect the driver announced that it was now safe to cross. We protested, but there was such conviction in his voice that we let him have his way. To his credit be it said that he forded the stream with the utmost caution, forcing his machine over hidden logs and boulders with a slow sureness that made us change our mind about his reliability.

This done, we relaxed and dozed. We were aroused by a premonition that something was wrong. The car had stopped. And then the driver leaned over and tapped us.

" This is Arriaga," he said, " and this is your hotel."

We got out swiftly and stared at the nearby rails of the Pan-American line, which in the moonlight appeared to have some dreamlike quality on which we could place no reliance. We had been jolting so long through the primitive mountains that the notion of a ride on the smooth steel rails of civilization seemed nonsensical.

The Spaniard walked up to our wild Indian chauffeur and shook him gravely by the hand. He turned to me.

" Now," he said, " let's us three go in and have a bottle of beer."

## IX

Across the street a little Indian soldier staggered from a cantina, waving his rifle and trying to sing. An officer separated himself from a nearby group of friends with whom he was chatting, and running furiously up to the soldier, whipped out his sword, and beat him about the body with the flat of the blade. The soldier sank down humbly. The officer cursed him and ordered him to be taken away. He recrossed the street and resumed his conversation with his friends, straightening his bent sword against the edge of the stone curb.

## XXI

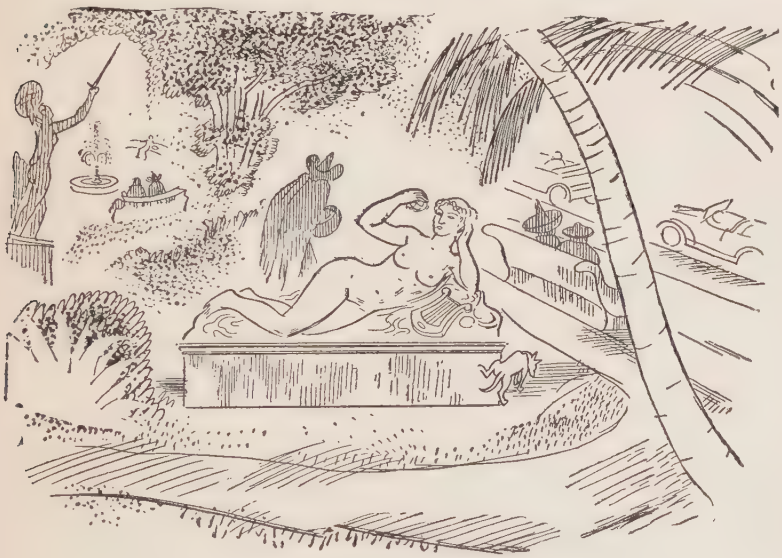
## *ON THE PACIFIC SIDE*

THE next morning as I stepped out of my room, I found my door surrounded by a half dozen small boys each of whom loudly declared that I had made a definite appointment with him to carry my baggage down to the railroad station. I remembered nothing of this, but since I had several bags and bundles I eventually engaged the whole lot as porters at a few centavos each.

Another dispute then broke out as to which bag should be carried by which boy, and a settlement was arrived at only when I appointed the oldest boy, a tall serious-faced lad, as *jefe de la expedición* in charge of all matters relating to my safe arrival at the station, which was some hundred yards distant. This title pleased the young leader immensely, and I quickly discovered that I had done precisely the right thing, for he not only disciplined the other boys into rigid order, but began instantly to caution me against travelling farther with my baggage in its damaged condition. " Then you do what is necessary," said I, and he sent the other boys out for twine and leather straps, and himself tied up my gaping bags so that they were once more in a presentable state.

Then each shouldered his burden and the cavalcade, with myself as rear guard, wound its way through the corridors of the hotel, through the breakfast room where astonished travellers were having their *café con leche* and *pan dulce,* and out to the street where passersby stopped to gaze at us with much nudging and grinning.

When the train up from the Guatemalan border trundled in, these boys selected a seat for me and piled my baggage



*European "Art" in a Mexican Park*

around it with meticulous care, for they were much impressed by the fact that I was travelling first-class.

This seems to be a proper place to pay a tribute to the Mexican small boy, who never has received his due in the manifold books written about Mexican life. Whether he be mestizo or pure Indian, he is one of the chief charms of Mexico. Almost invariably he is well-mannered, faithful, and an enthusiastic

assistant and counsellor. Though usually neglected and unschooled, he is eager, alert, and intelligent. He is the raw material out of which, given the right conditions, a great people will eventually grow. Throughout our travels in his land, he was always our friend and frequently our chief reliance, and I hope that some day the little brown lad of Mexico will be provided with the opportunities which will give his quick mind and great heart their just due.

## II

This train, like all others in Mexico, carried an armed guard, and I felt flattered when, as the only first-class passenger, two soldiers took the seat just behind me and two the seat ahead.

It is to be doubted if there is a more interesting railroad in Mexico than this little line which runs up from the Suchiata River on the Guatemalan border to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and no one whose knowledge of Mexico is confined to the arid, desert regions of the north can comprehend how luxuriantly the Mexican soil can burst into overflowing plant and animal life when given its meed of warmth and moisture.

We trundled along at a moderate speed through gigantic forests of rare and valuable woods, and crossed fertile plains knee-deep with grass on which cattle roamed by hundreds of thousands. Along the way we passed tremendous fincas, plantations, some of them containing fifty thousand acres and more, which produce quantities of coffee, sugar-cane, rubber, cacao,

resin, cabinet woods, dye woods, corn, and henequen, not to mention countless varieties of tropical fruits.

In places the view from the car windows was breath-taking, for on one side lay the soaring peaks of the Sierra Madre and on the other the Pacific Ocean. We crossed river after river, many of them widening into lagoons afloat with water-fowl, while at every tiny station there was a burst of color provided by the female vendors of eatables, who met every train, and above whose chatter could be heard the screams of tame macaws and parrots.

The women furnished evidence that we were approaching the land of the celebrated Tehuanas, the Junoesque Zapotec women renowned in travellers' tales. The huipil, the embroidered jacket of southern Mexico, was strongly in evidence, imparting flashes of scarlet against a background of white-washed buildings. The young women of this region are frequently of a surpassing loveliness and all the more interesting to the traveller because they have had the sense and the good taste to cling to their own costumes, which so admirably accord with their brown faces, arms, and feet, instead of yielding to the American or European styles in which the Indian girl looks absurd.

The fruits and flowers which these women bring to the train are cool and delicious, but their baskets bear other commodities ruinous to the Nordic palate. These are *enchiladas,* which are rolled up and fried tortillas containing meat or vegetables, ground with chili peppers hotter than melted metal. Once an enchilada is planted in a Nordic interior, even floods of ice-water and cold beer avail little to drown the fire which seems to eat into the fibers of one's very being. The Mexican

stomach is supposed to be callous to these baked torments, but it can scarcely be doubted that the intestinal diseases which doctors say are rife throughout Mexico are largely due to the native passion for more and hotter peppers.

## III

At every station the little train made a prolonged stop, and an atmosphere of friendliness and informality developed as the compartment gradually filled up and *cerverzitas,* half bottles of beer, began to circulate among groups of passengers who all seemed to know each other and who thus sought to moisten throats made ever drier by the mounting dust and the increasing heat. However, there have been times when life along the line has not been so peaceful; in fact, virtually every station has seen severe fighting during the Revolution, and even now the well-guarded trains are not exempt from attacks. Wherever men gather in Mexico, the conversation sooner or later eddies around to the Revolution and its bloody incidents. From a corner I heard a story being told by a man whose face I could not see.

" When I was last at this station," said the voice, " I met, as I stepped down from the train, an officer hurrying along with a squad of soldiers. When he turned his head I recognized him as a young captain whom I had known rather well in his lieutenant days.

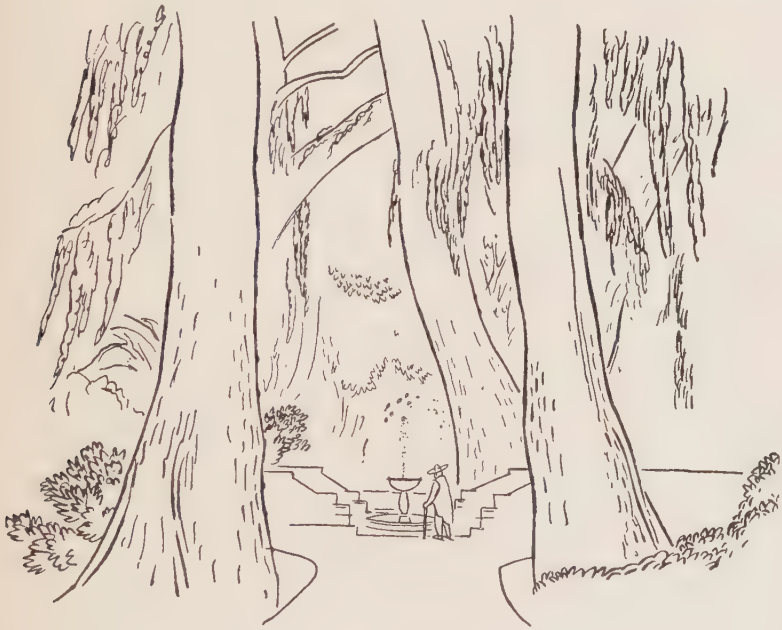
" ' Hello,' he said, ' you're just in time. We're going to shoot a man. Come on and see it. I'll see that you get a good view.'

*Tehuana Women, Tehuantepec*

" ' No,' I said, ' you will have to excuse me just now — I am on my way to keep an appointment.'

" ' But it will only take a few minutes,' he said. ' Our man is tied up and waiting. Come along, it is only a step from here.'

" The captain was so insistent that I did not like to offend him by refusing. Besides, I was curious, so I fell in and walked with him to the place of execution.



*Stately Ahuehuetes (Cypresses)*

" Under a large tree at a crossroads stood a young Indian tied by his hands and feet to the trunk. In front of him was a short trench freshly dug, very likely by the prisoner himself, as is the custom in such cases. He was only a ragged boy about eighteen years old, but he had a bright and intelligent face. He smiled at me, showing a row of fine white teeth.

"'Hello, doctor,' he called to me. 'Don't you remember me? You treated my mother that time when she broke her arm.'

"'Oh yes, I remember now,' I said, 'and how is your mother these days?'

"'She's well and working every day. Only she won't be working today, because they are going to kill me.'

"'What for?'

"'How should I know? They caught me one night when I went to see my mother, and now they are going to shoot me.'

"The captain meantime had been busy inspecting his men's rifles. He now formed them in line and told me he wanted to get it over with.

"'What has this boy done?' I asked him.

"'Oh, he belonged to a gang that's been coming down from the hills to raid towns along the railroad. He was one of the ringleaders.'

"'But he comes of a good family,' I said. 'I know his mother. Is it right to kill him like this?'

"'Yes,' said the captain. 'He's a bad lot,' and told his men to get on their mark.

"'Do you want to be blindfolded?' he said to the boy.

"'No,' said the boy, 'shoot.'

"'Have you any messages to send to your relatives?' asked the officer.

"'No,' said the boy, 'except that I want my mother to know that I died like an *Azteca*. Tell her that, will you doctor?'

"I promised. The soldiers took aim, the captain dropped his sword, and the volley of bullets struck the boy in the breast

over the heart. The blow forced the air out of the lad's mouth with a sound like 'hough!' and he crumpled over like a rag. But he was not dead, and the captain finished him off with a pistol shot through the head.

"'Hurry up,' said the officer to his men. 'We've got other things to do.'

"They cut him loose, flung the body into the hole, and covered it over.

"'Quick work, wasn't it?' said the captain to me. 'In these parts we don't dawdle when we kill a man. I told you it would take only a few minutes, didn't I?'"

## IV

The train now entered a marshy region covered with a thick grass from which yellow grass-hoppers sprang up and fluttered away in dense billows. Hereabouts the cattle covered a thousand hills. They grazed close to the tracks and paid little attention to the screeching locomotive, which indeed was not much bigger than they. A bump was felt throughout the train, which paused perceptibly and then proceeded. I looked out of the window; a beautiful cow lay close to the rails. She had been struck in the hind-quarters, and her crumpled legs lay stretched out behind her in a bloody mass. She turned her head to look up at the car windows, as if wondering how anything could have the heart to strike her down in a region where there was space enough for all living beings. Three times that day the train struck a grazing animal, which, because herdsmen

were few, probably lay where they fell until the zopilotes came to remove the scars from the thick grass.

The fertility of this region, with its red and brown soil and numerous streams, is overwhelming. Fruits abound and are sold at absurd prices, even by the somewhat sophisticated female vendors who line the track at every station. Once I handed an old woman ten centavos, for which she continued to pass me the tiny delicious bananas of tropical Mexico, three and four inches long, until I was compelled to ask her to stop. Cocoanuts, full of cool liquid, could be had, by bargaining, for a centavo — one-half cent U. S. — each. Pineapples, zapote nuts, mameys, guanabanas, and other succulent products of the country could also be had in great quantities for a small coin.

To the typical Mexican, travelling on a railroad is virtually synonymous with eating. No sooner does he install himself in a seat than he leans out of a window and begins to buy. Many times I had been warned against the consumption of eatables sold through car-windows, owing to total disregard of all the laws of cleanliness and sanitation, but hunger assailed me long before the train arrived at the station where twenty minutes is allowed for a restaurant meal, and I bought roasted leg of chicken, tamales wrapped in banana leaves, and tortillas without stint. The cooking of southern Mexico may be, as proclaimed, insanitary, but there is no disputing its savoriness, and it is due the country to say that no ill effects followed.

## V

By sunset, which was a rose-red one streaked with lemon yellow, I was walking from the little station at Tehuantepec up the hill which gives the ancient town its name, the suffix *tepec* being derived from the Aztec *tepetl,* a hill. Tehuantepec therefore means " the hill of the Tehuanas," the sturdy Zapotec tribe who yielded neither to the Aztecs nor the Spaniards, who fought off the captains of Cortes when they came to strip the town of the gold which it still loves, and whose women are regarded as the handsomest and strongest in Mexico.

The path led upward through an avenue of magnificent palms rearing their heads from a marsh which gave forth a weird, cacophonous sound. It came from the celebrated Tehuantepec bullfrogs, which are excessively large and continuously musical. The scent of odorous flowers lay heavily in the still, moist air, strengthened perceptibly by the smell of giant azucemas. The complete stillness and soundlessness of the place appeared unnatural, and not only nebulous odors but premonitions seemed to hang in the air.

## XXII

## *A MEXICAN EARTHQUAKE*

THE little inn at whose patio gate I knocked was presided over by two sisters, tall and handsome creatures wearing their hair in two long plaits down their backs and dressed in embroidered scarlet huipils over which hung heavy necklaces made of gold coins, chiefly United States currency. The dinner hour was over but they ordered a special meal to be cooked and served to me in the patio, shaded with palms and fragrant with azucemas. I received a room large enough to hold forty men, its petate-covered bed looking very small in a distant corner. The adjoining room was occupied by a German business man, heavy and pink, with a double chin on the back of his neck. I heard him singing in German as he splashed in his bath.

From the kitchen came a Zapotec girl carrying my dinner on an enormous tray. It was a pleasure to watch the litheness and ease with which she carried her burden, balanced on hand and shoulder.

A few feet from me she hesitated. She stopped as if to listen, her eyes widening. Down crashed the tray of dishes.

" Temblor! Temblor! " she screamed, and fled back towards the kitchen. The broad-faced cook came to the door and screamed.

"Temblor" is Spanish for earthquake, but at the first instant I was not sure I had caught the word clearly. The next moment matters were clear enough. There was indeed an earthquake. It began with a series of vibrations which, tentative at first, became persistent and steady, gradually rising to a perceptible swing which made doors creak on their hinges and pictures bang against the walls.

*Ancient Aztec Stone Lion*

The house resounded with screams. From the town itself came a human murmur which swelled to a moan. Feet clattered noisily on the pavements outside and were suddenly still. The quake widened its rhythms, the stones beneath one's feet seeming to undulate in waves like those of the sea or the swaying tops of a cornfield. The earth, once so solid, quivered like an uncertain jelly. Its action seemed inexcusable, like the gross betrayal of an utterly trusted friend.

The women of the house, wailing and beseeching the heavens with uplifted arms, ran to the patio. The instinct to get out from under a roof was instant. The door of the German's room was flung back and out he walked, naked and pink, drying himself with a towel. Without ceasing for an instant to ply his towel, he stalked across the patio and stood in the midst of the women, drying himself and looking a little startled but otherwise unconcerned. No one paid any attention to him, and he walked around in circles, rubbing the pink of his body to a dark red with vigorous strokes of his towel. He held to it as if it were a kind of talisman, a fetish guaranteed to ward off earthquakes.

In four minutes the quake had subsided. The German stalked pinkly back to his room, still plying his towel, and the women dispersed to their occupations. I had to wait until a new dinner had been cooked.

The temblor, though not as destructive as some that have visited southern Mexico in recent years, was sufficiently severe, killing several people in the neighboring state of Oaxaca and opening cracks in the pavements of Mexico City.

## II

The next day in Tehuantepec. On the street a tall, heavy figure. The dress is Mexican but the determined stride is not the languorous glide of the native. The features are browned by the sun, but the set grimness about the eyes and the corners of the mouth are nothing if not Nordic. I have not seen his

*Candy Hawker, Isthmian Railway*

like in a long time, but there is no mistaking his nationality. Every movement bears the hard gritty stamp of the country north of the Rio Grande. We meet, hesitate, eye each other suspiciously, and speak as *paisanos,* fellow countrymen. His Western accent is incredible, dreamlike, in this soft, melting atmosphere. His face relaxes and he permits himself to laugh. The laugh improves him, dissolving the artificial grimness out of his face. Though he is a man of some forty years, he becomes suddenly boyish and pleasant-spoken. After some fencing, he accepts me and invites me to his home for dinner. I accept.

His house is high-ceilinged, cool and tiled, its Hispano-Mexican character fighting with North American fixtures and plumbing. Odors from massed flowers give secret battle to the prim whatnot on which they rest.

His wife is a Tehuana woman. On her soft-slippered feet she glides in gracefully and curls herself up in a corner like a panther on a limb. She is poised and gracious in her manner. The five children come in, three dainty girls, pliant and a little timid, the two boys tousled and riotous. We get down on the floor and play with giant beetles which the boys have brought in. The father shouts with laughter at their antics. The mother adds to the entertainment by showing me the Tehuana festal costume, with its wide white stiffly-starched Elizabethan ruff worn around the face in church but in the street dropped so as to hang fluttering from the back. She shows her collection of twenty-five huipils, made in rainbow colors and embroidered with rows of gold thread. Such huipils are scarce now, having been driven out by machine-made garments, and the women no longer care to spend the many hours necessary for the

*Oaxacan Hills from Tehuantepec; Black Specks are Bathers*

proper starching of the white ruffs. Dinner is served in the patio and we are all very merry.

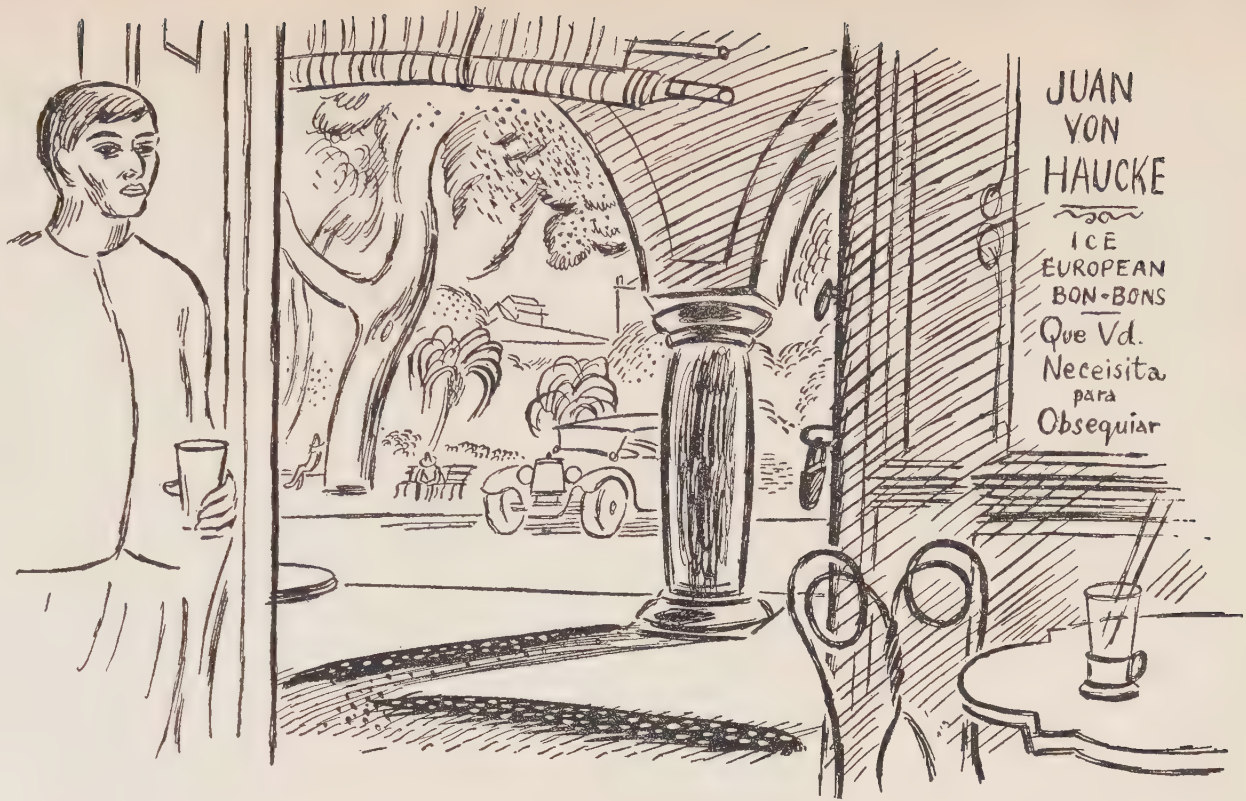
" You must go up to the ranch with me tomorrow," remarks the host. " I've got to have a game of set-back."

So we go up the Isthmian railway line the next morning and spend the day seeing logs of rare woods being hauled in from the Oaxacan hills. The railway ties on this line used to be cut from mahogany, but that wood is scarcer now. After dinner we play set-back. At midnight we go to the station and wake up the agent to buy a ticket. When the train arrives, I am introduced to the conductor and the engineer. They promise to see me safely to Vera Cruz. If bandits attack, I am to lie down in the aisle, folding my coat and using it for a pillow. They give these instructions jokingly, but no one laughs very loud, for bandits have frequently held up trains on this line. An armed guard is visible at both ends of this train, as on all others.

As we trundle northward, a man in the next seat tells a story about a young naturalist from Chicago who once came to Oaxaca looking for rare birds. He was young and kindly, and at each pueblo the people helped him hunt birds, saying that all was quiet here but he must have a care when he reached the next mountain. At the next mountain there was the same hospitality. At length he encountered a sentry on a mountain path, who took him in charge and led him to the jefe to give an account of himself. The young man explained that he was only looking for birds.

" What sort of birds? "

The naturalist described the specimens he most wanted to collect. The bandit leader said he believed he knew where




*Vera Cruz Café*

those birds were to be found. He called a few men and escorted the young man to a swamp. There they all ran themselves ragged. After several days they had worn themselves out but they got the birds.

The chief then gave the naturalist a letter of introduction to the band that held the neighboring mountain, inviting him to come again and saying that not since he was a *chicuelo,* a little fellow, had he had such a good time.

When my informant went away, he left behind a newspaper. In it was an account of the military execution of all the officials of a little Oaxacan town save three who escaped. One night the lieutenant in charge of the nearest army post received a confidential telegram from Mexico City ordering him to execute all these officials as traitors. Among them were several close personal friends, but he took a squad of soldiers, roused the victims from their beds, and shot them. The next day he learned that the telegram was bogus, having been forged at Mexico City by an enemy of the government.

Our train reached Vera Cruz the next morning without incident from bandits or any other persons. As I passed the engine, the engineer leaned down from his cab to shake hands.

"Adiós, señor. I said we would bring you through, no?"

## XXIII

# *BACK ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE RIO GRANDE*

IT is only when one has left Mexico City behind, crossed the deserts of the north, and is back once more on the upper side of the Rio Grande that one comes to know, even if only a little, the Mexico which one has just left. To stand between the feet of what Latin Americans call "the Colossus of the North" is to realize the immense weight which presses down on Mexico with a force which is not less impressive because impersonal.

The towns north of the Rio Grande strike one in the face like things of steel. The throb of power is felt the moment the great yellow river is crossed. Human life has suddenly taken on not only a different appearance but quality. Poverty keeps itself humbly out of sight. Sanitation parades itself with an ostentation that becomes almost a leer. One notices for the first time the smugness that accompanies mere good health. Well-being sings a lullaby to itself in terms of enormous locomotives, swinging cranes, shiny brick, the smell of fresh paint, and the sheer silk stockings on the long legs of women.

Everywhere is evidence of the desire of men to separate themselves from contact with the earth. Between it and themselves

they construct the soles of shoes, pavements of polished stone, air-filled tires, and the thick cells of massed buildings.

The people, sleek and comfort-loving, are unified, electric, and uniform. They are living in the present day, the present hour, the present moment. How odd to see all this again, on coming up from dusty Mexico, where in almost every man's soul the Spaniard fights the Indian, the Aztec and the Maya carry on a secret struggle with the aboriginal, and medievalism wars with the short-cuts of the twentieth century.

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ROUTE BY BOAT
" " TRAIN
" " CANOE ... (Dugout)
" " HORSE
" " BULLOCK
" " TRAMCAR (horse)
" " MOTOR
" " MOTOR BOAT
HIDALGO
Mexico
TLAXCALA
Jalapa
Vera Cruz
Orizaba
Puebla
MORELOS
PUEBLA
VERA CRUZ
Tierra Blanca
GUERRERO
Oaxaca
N
TEHUANTEPEC
San Jeronimo
Tehuantepec
Salina Cruz
Closed
OAXACA
Puerto Angel
PACIFIC OCEAN

Progreso
Bocas
Tizimin
Merida
Uxmal
Sotuta
Temple of Tigre
Chichen Itza
YUCATAN
CAMPECHE
QUINTANA ROO
Campeche
Carmen
Villa Hermosa
Belize
Turneffe
Cayo Ambergris
AMERICA
BRITISH HONDURAS
GUATEMALA
CHIAPAS
Bochil
San Cristóbal
Amatse
Mapastepec
Colores
CENTRAL
HONDURAS
SAL